THE ART OF

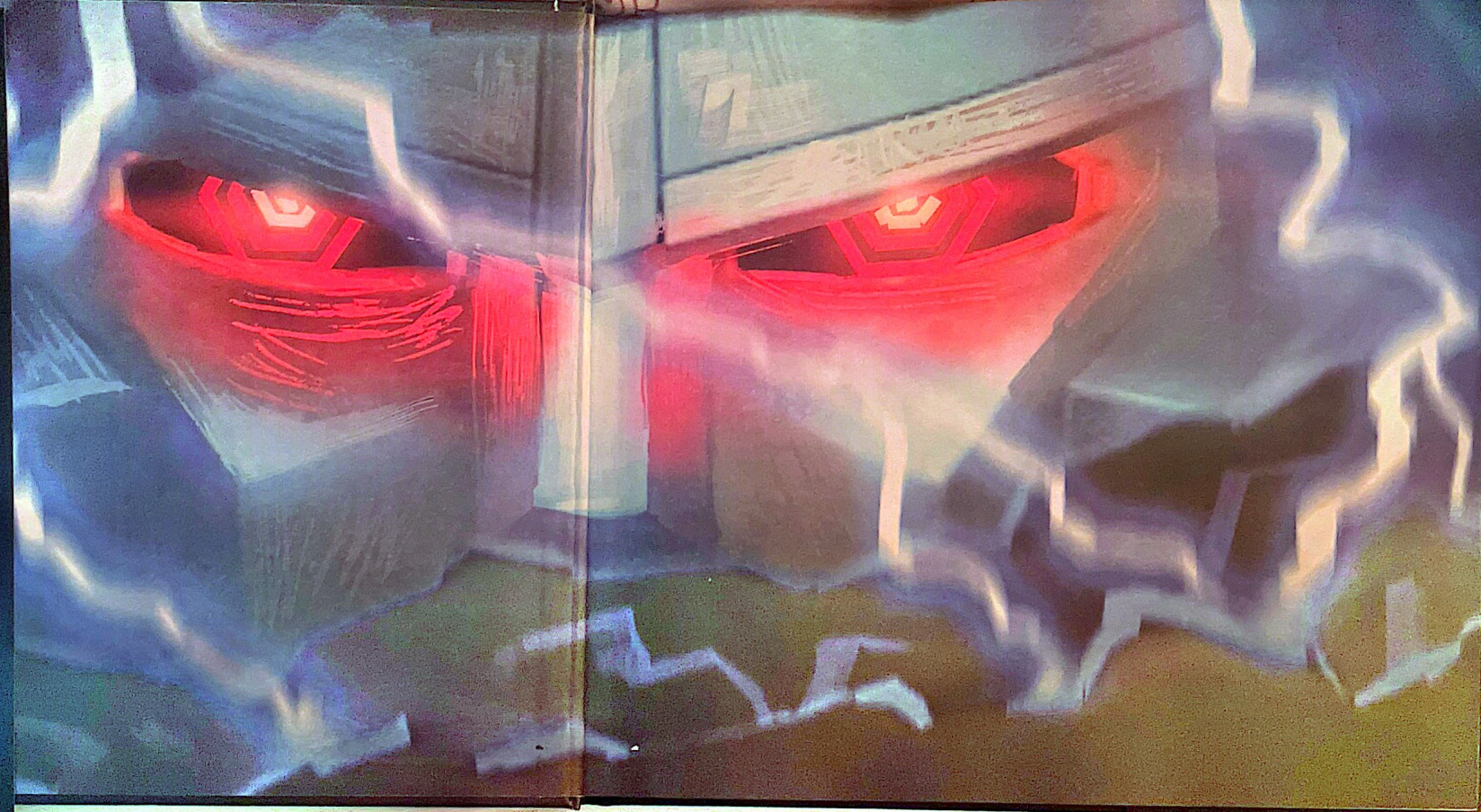
TRANSFORMERS ONE

RAMIN ZAHED

FORTY YEARS after these now-iconic transforming robots were first introduced to fans around the world, a new CG-animated movie set billions of years before the events of the core mythology has redefined and reintroduced the popular characters to the big screen.

Transformers One not only breathes new souls into these familiar machines, but also takes fans deep into the world of Cybertron and back to the very genesis of Optimus Prime and Megatron's relationship—from fast friends to archenemies. This book captures the essence of the conceptual artwork that brought the filmmakers' vision to life.

"The world of Transformers has a fantastic, mythic quality to it," says director Josh Cooley. "These characters are robots, but they're more than meets the eye. The key to bringing them to animated life was tapping into their human core. The look of the movie is just as epic, and it's unlike anything that has been done before."



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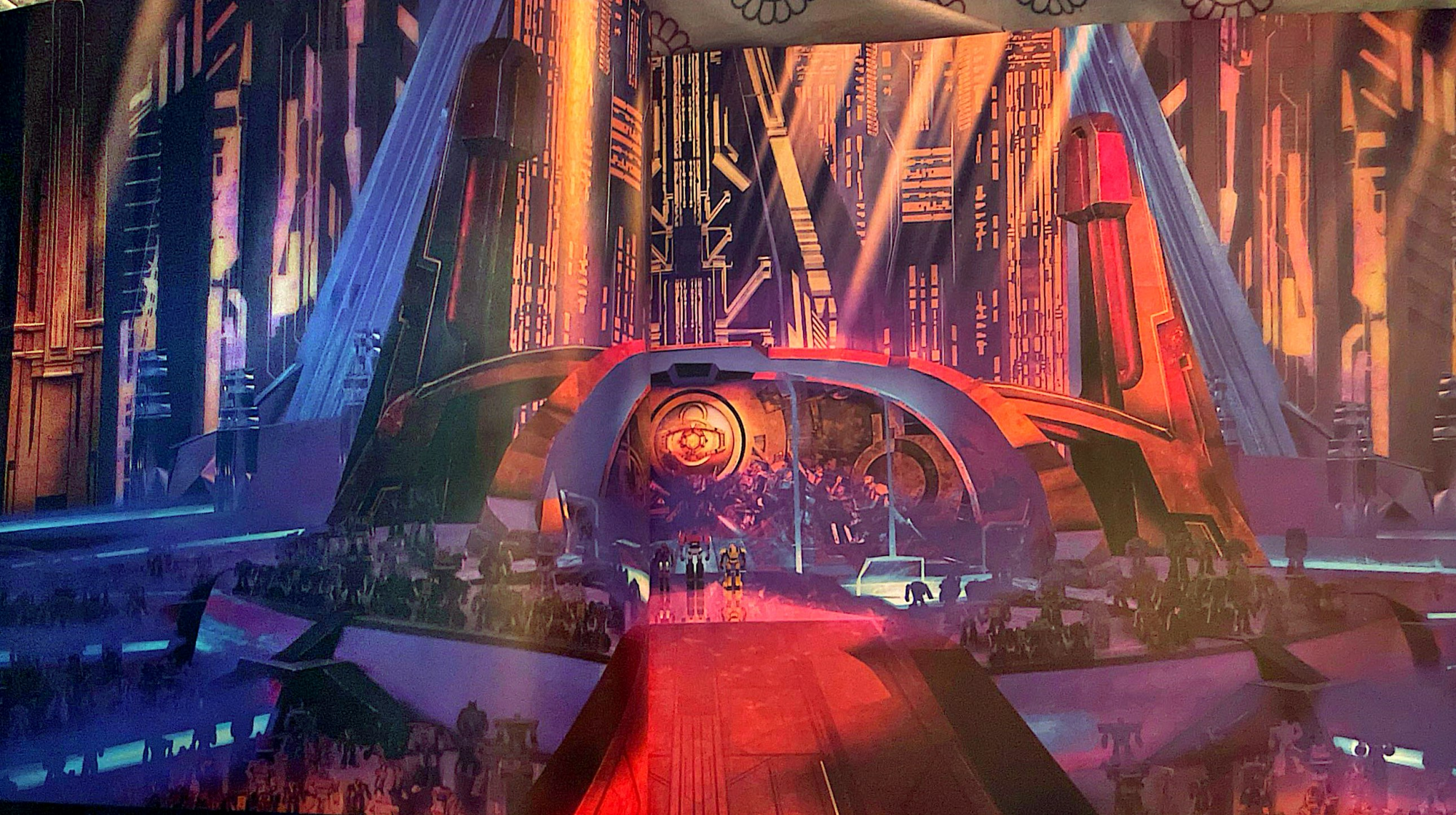

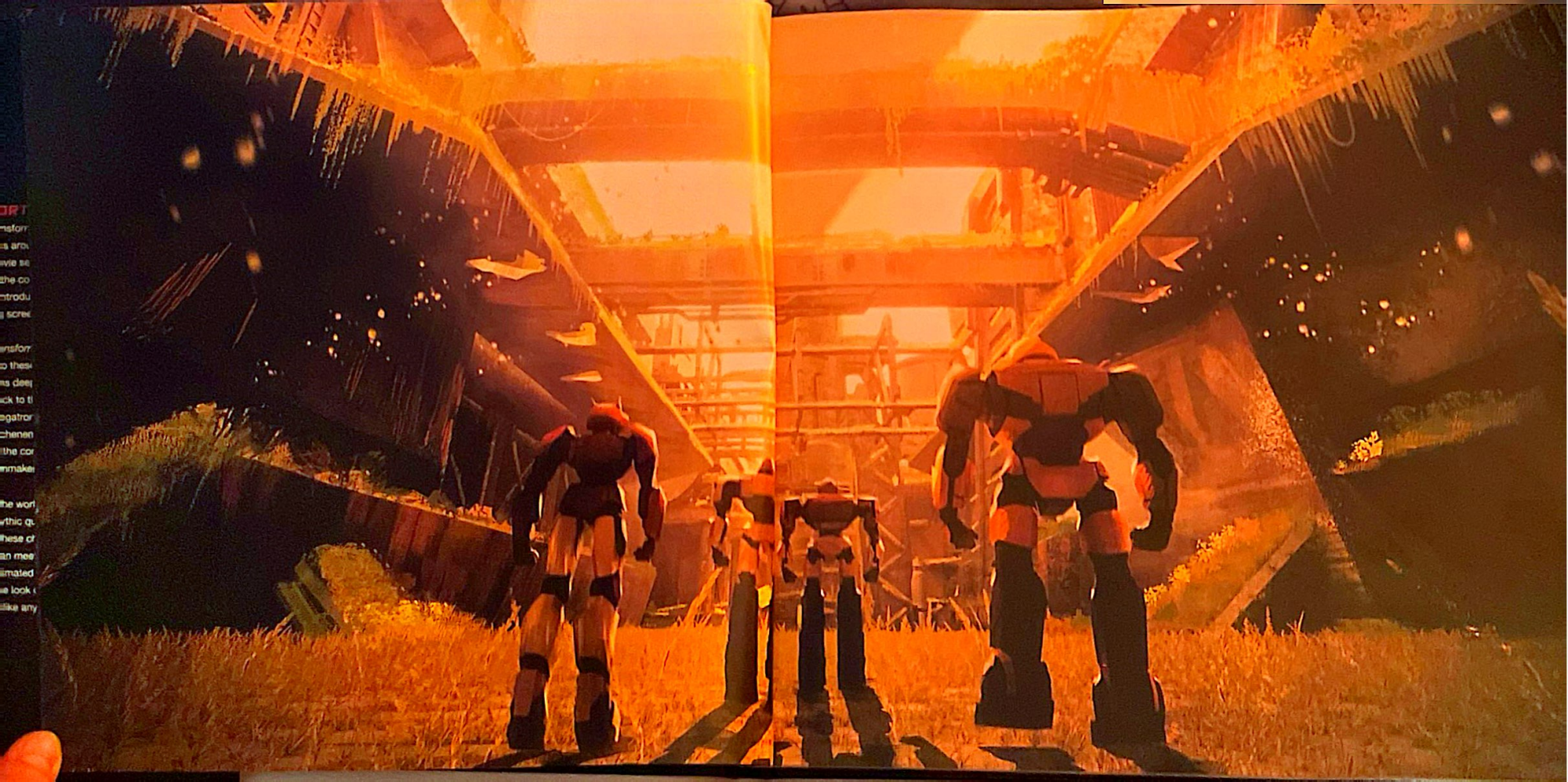

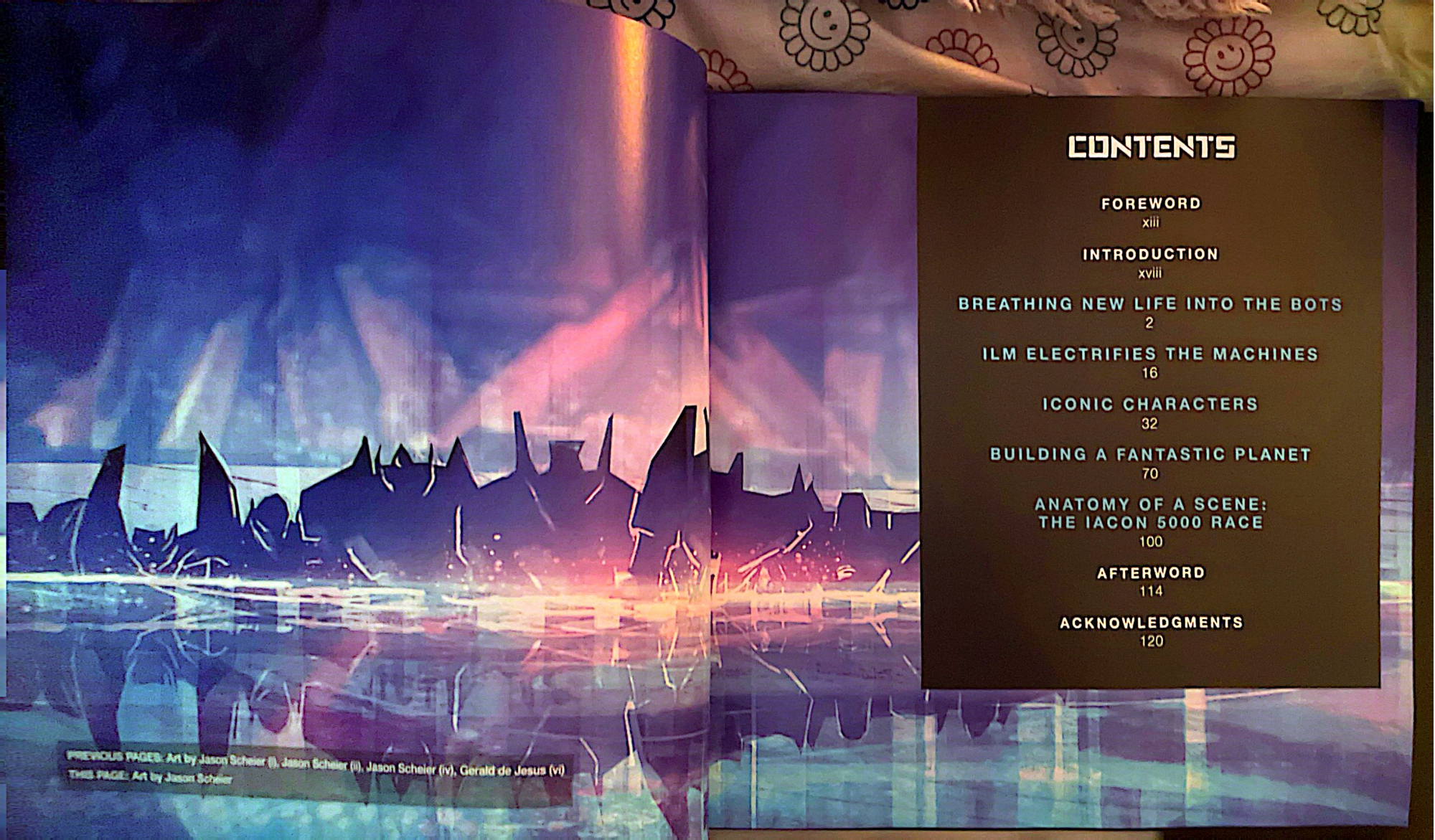

PREVIOUS PAGES: Art by Jason Scheier (i), Jason Scheier (ii), Jason Scheier (iv), Gerald de Jesus (vi)
THIS PAGE: Art by Jason Scheier

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FOREWORD

London 2012. The lights on the ceiling are rushing by me; I'm on a stretcher. We enter the operating room, and I'm placed on the operating table. Facing my mortality. The nurse introduces the technician—let's call him Harry. I'm told Harry is integral to the success of this heart procedure. We say hello and Harry asks me if I'm the producer of *Transformers*. What?!

Harry tells me that he and his brother are major Transformers fans and own more than 1,700 Transformers between them. I am wondering where this is going when he says, "Maybe this isn't the right time for this conversation." I realize, actually, it is.

I say, "Please keep going—this is the first time I haven't thought about dying all day." After a bit more of his story, Harry says, "I'm such a fan, I even own Transformers boxers." Suddenly he pulls down his pants enough for us all to see he is, indeed, wearing Optimus Prime boxers. The operating room bursts into laughter—and proves to me yet again that there are no more committed fans than Transformers fans.

When we started our *Transformers* journey, I had no idea that twenty years later it would play such a huge role in my creative life. We have had amazing artists pushing our creativity forward and passionate fans driving our amazing success. So here we are with our eighth movie—*Transformers One*—the first that's animated, and what a feast for the eyes it is!

We started discussing the origin story of Optimus and Megatron early on. It is emotionally rich and has fabulous scale, and its setting on Cybertron offered an opportunity for unbridled visuals and storytelling. We knew that the medium of animation would allow us the freedom we wanted to create a world with limitless artistic possibilities and the ability to cross all borders and boundaries with our storytelling.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Art by Gerald de Jesus
LEFT: Art by Adam Ely

Each time we started to talk about the next movie, the power of the *Transformers One* story kept reappearing in our creative conversations. Despite the formidable bar the 1986 animated movie had set, the strength of this story eventually won out and we embarked on this new version of *Transformers*.

The opportunity we had in front of us was to explore the very substance of our robot characters—their belief systems, emotions, friendships, and yes, their humanity. This required many, many people working at the top of their game. Truly a village. Importantly, we found in Josh Cooley a director whose imagination and love for *Transformers* kept everyone motivated and reaching for their very best.

We wanted to push into unprecedented visual territory, and Josh and our team got us there. You will see this represented by the art in this book. The characters look phenomenal. Cybertron is beautiful and awe-inspiring, definitely a one-of-a-kind planet. Colorful and ominous, and it transforms!

You will also get to absorb the full pageantry of this planet in the best way possible—on the big screen. And there, you will find great characters and lots of fun. For those of us who have played a part in its creation, this movie has been the most satisfying experience. We all hope readers and viewers find it equally so.

Transformers fans: Roll out!

—LORENZO DI BONAVENTURA, PRODUCER

ABOVE: Concept painting by Josh Co

INTRODUCTION

I can't remember a time when I didn't know the words "Autobots" or "Decepticons." The infamous robots in disguise were ingrained in my psyche the first moment I heard that iconic "TSCHE-CHU-CHU-CHU-TSCHE."

Every Saturday morning throughout the 1980s, my brother and I were planted in front of the boob tube, my parents constantly telling us to not sit so close to the fourteen-inch, nuclear-powered television. "Move back. It's bad for your eyes" was the anthem of my childhood. But we still inched closer and closer every half hour, the miracle box luring us in, pumping the pleasure centers of our brains with sarcastic cartoon cats, tiny blue people, American heroes, a muscular man on a green tiger, and other hand-drawn fantasies coming to life at twenty-four frames per second. We'd watch all morning, waiting to hear the staccato keyboard that began the theme song to the greatest cartoon of them all: giant fighting robots in disguise, the Transformers. While destroying the roof of my mouth as I chomped down on Cap'n Crunch, I was captivated by these metallic titans. Each insane adventure was more bizarre than the last, but full of characters you wanted to spend time with, on- and off-screen, if you were fortunate enough to get the toys.

My memory of that time spent with animated friends highly influenced the making of *Transformers One*. I wanted this film to feel nostalgic, bringing fans who grew up with *Transformers* back to the 1980s, but also accessible for newcomers to the franchise. What I didn't anticipate was going on this journey with a crew who loved it as much as I do. Working side by side with such immensely talented fans of Optimus and Megatron, people who really know and care about the characters, made me fall in love with these robots all over again.

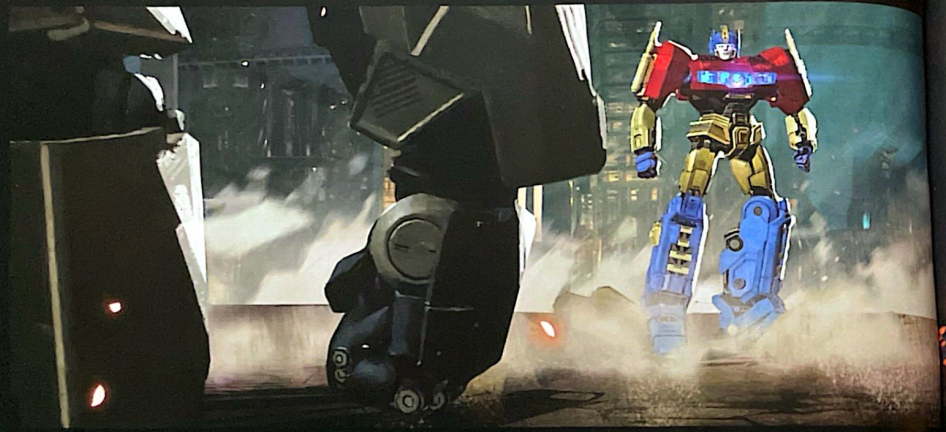
PREVIOUS PAGE: Art by Gerald de Jesus
RIGHT: Art by Yun Ling

The love the *Transformers One* crew put into making the film is something you can feel on-screen during the movie, and you will feel it even more in this book you're holding. It wasn't until I was working on this film that I really thought about the phrase "more than meets the eye." It obviously applies to robots hiding in plain sight as Earth vehicles, but it's more powerful than that: it's the idea that we shouldn't judge others or ourselves by our appearances, that we are all capable of being greater than we give ourselves credit for, and that we have the ability to transform our own lives . . . Pretty deep messages for a Saturday morning cartoon. But they are lessons that we continue to need to hear all around the world. I believe that is why *Transformers* has continued to thrive for more than forty years, and why Optimus Prime is still revered by millions of people. He heroically stands for autonomy, freedom, honor, and protecting those who need help. He's a selfless leader who dreams of a world *without* fighting. A world where we all come together, as ONE.

—JOSH COOLEY, DIRECTOR

LEFT: Art by Gerald de Jesus
NEXT PAGE: Art by Yun Ling

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO THE BOTS



A world of alien robots that can transform into a wide variety of vehicles, weapons, machinery, and even animals lends itself perfectly to animation. That's probably why Hasbro's Transformers toy concept, which was first introduced to the world by Japan's Takara Tomy toy company in 1984, has inspired three previous animated movies and dozens of series and specials—all of which are beloved by generations of fans worldwide. Given this long résumé of successful animated projects, it's no wonder the newest offering in the franchise pivoted away from live action and back to its original animated form.

When the talented team behind Paramount and Hasbro Entertainment's 2024 feature, *Transformers One*, first assembled to create a new CG-animated take on the franchise more than four years ago, they set out to breathe new souls into these familiar machines. Director Josh Cooley and producers Michael Bay, Aaron Dem, Tom DeSanto, Lorenzo di Bonaventura, Don Murphy, and Mark Vahradian were eager to put a new shine on the classic characters while being respectful of the love fans feel for these "robots in disguise."

ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: Art by Jason Scheier

"This rivalry between Optimus Prime and Megatron is so well-known, yet people haven't really understood the reasons behind it. So I think fans and the general public will want to learn a little bit more about their history."

—ZEV FOREMAN,
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, HASBRO

A PRIMAL ORIGIN STORY

Revealing that Optimus Prime and Megatron were once friends who knew each other as Orion Pax (voiced by Chris Hemsworth) and D-16 (Brian Tyree Henry), the film traces the early days of their friendship and chronicles the events that led to them becoming bitter enemies.

TOP ROW, LEFT: Art by ABC
BOTTOM, LEFT: Art by Yun Ling
ABOVE: Art by Adam J. Ely

Transformers One's colorful cast of characters also includes Scarlett Johansson as Elita, Keegan-Michael Key as B-127/Bumblebee, Jon Hamm as Sentinel Prime, Steve Buscemi as Starscream, and Laurence Fishburne as Alpha Trio.

"The movie is really about the relationship between Orion Pax and D-16 and how they became enemies while starting out as close friends," explains Cooley, who won an Oscar for helming Pixar's *Toy Story 4*. "The thing that starts to drive a wedge between them is that

the world is not what they thought it was, and they then start to form two different views on how to solve the problem. I would always come back to that and think about their relationship and how every story point, design, and element is really supporting that story about the two of them. Optimus Prime and Megatron are almost these mythological Greek gods or Titans. They're almost as iconic as good versus evil. There have obviously been a lot of versions of this story, but it always came down to how primal it is. That got me very excited about this project."

The film's head of layout, Chris Batty, agrees with Cooley that the tale of how Prime and Megatron came to be is similar to some creation myths. "It's something that echoes in classical Greek mythology or Japanese legends," he says. "They are iconic characters—one represents good and duty, and the other ends up standing for anger and fear. There's a lot for everyone to relate to. Nevertheless, the story is simple enough that it doesn't matter how old you are. You can enjoy it on its most basic level."

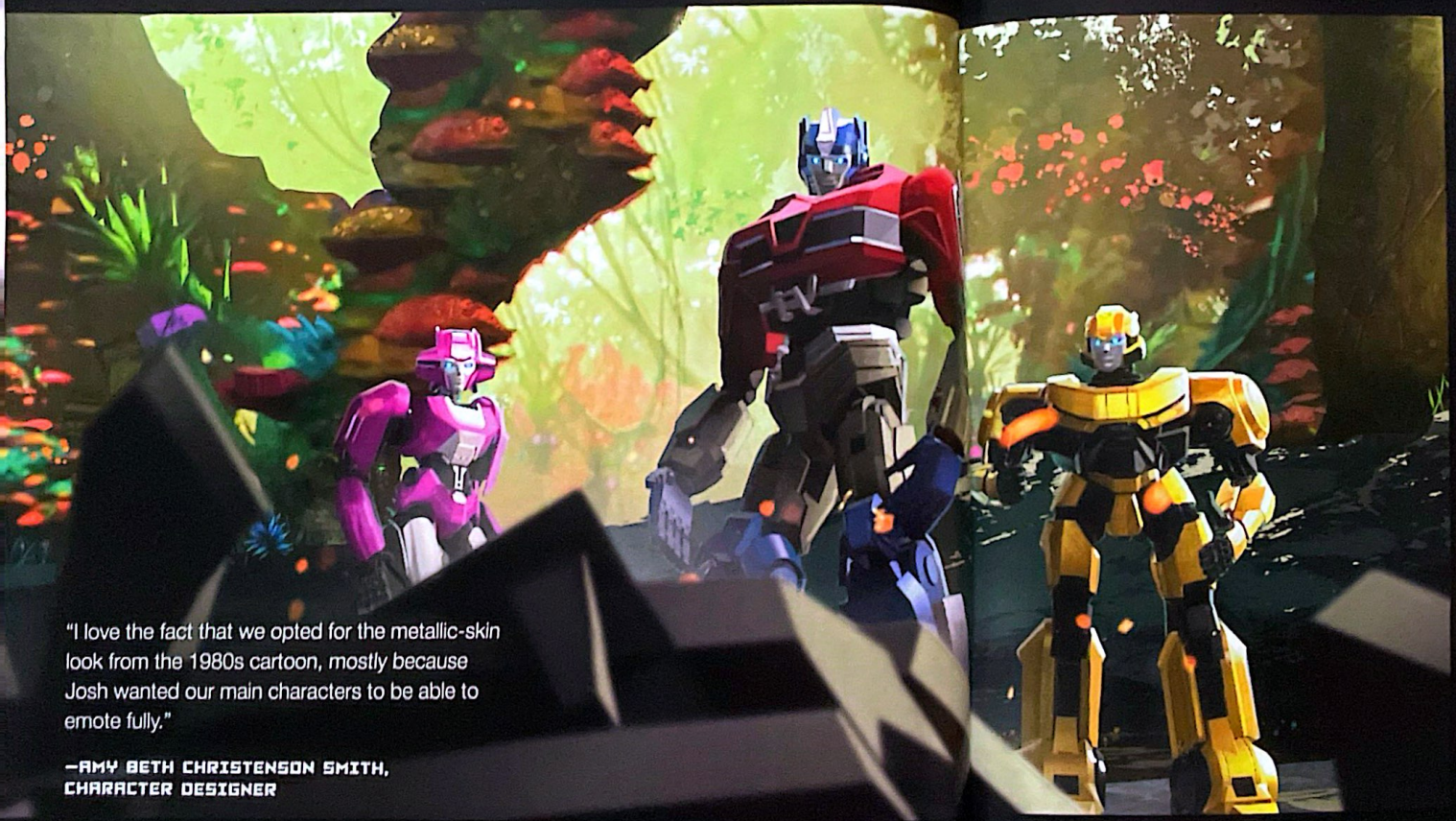
"Though we have produced seven live-action Transformers films, this is the first to solely embrace the robot point of view," says Vahradian. "On Earth, the Autobots protect humankind. On Cybertron, we discover that the Transformers have dreams of their own."

RIGHT: Art by Gerald de Jesus
NEXT PAGE: Art by Jason Scheier

ANIMATING AN ALIEN PLANET

Cooley welcomed the idea of playing in this iconic sandbox that contains so many entertaining characters and original environments. "The main idea behind *Transformers* is that there is this world where massive alien robots can transform into vehicles, which is a thrilling premise," he states. "Then, you have this whole secret war going on with these huge machines on this planet that we don't even know about."

Aaron Dem, a veteran producer whose credits include *How to Train Your Dragon 2*, *Extinct*, *Fantastic Four*, and *Journey to*



"I love the fact that we opted for the metallic-skin look from the 1980s cartoon, mostly because Josh wanted our main characters to be able to emote fully."

—AMY BETH CHRISTENSON SMITH, CHARACTER DESIGNER

the Center of the Earth, points out that when the team embarked on the project, they used the recent live-action movies as a benchmark for the plotlines and the comedy, but they went back to the first animated show for design inspiration. "When you see our original character designs, you'll notice that they are based on simpler shapes. The animation allowed the audience to connect with the robots' full range of emotions. Our Cybertron world really takes full advantage of the animation medium. There are no humans involved, so the goal was to hearken back to the original idea of the show in the 1980s, but also completely update it for twenty-first-century audiences."

Dem says he's especially proud of the fact that he and the creative team were able to paint a complex story that included highly entertaining and powerful emotional highs and lows. "It's really a story that brings together the emotion, humor, and action spectacle in a satisfying package."

"In addition to that," Dem continues, "we were able to push the boundaries visually with our animation. The characters in the movie move like robots, but the animation allows our core audience to identify with them as humans. Not to mention everything looks gorgeous from the very first minute of the film."

Production designer Jason Scheier (*Ultraman: Rising*, *Blue Eye Samurai*) says he was thrilled when he found out that Cooley wanted the designs to echo those of the first years of the franchise. "That completely sold me on the project, because Josh wanted to go back to Gen 1 designs and the origin story of what made *Transformers* special," he says. "We were able to draw from the work of [Filipino artist] Floro Dery, who did the initial sketches for the 1986 animated movie and the series as well. It was such a deep, richly detailed lore. Right after we were hired, Hasbro gave us the entire visual bible, and that was something that I'd never seen before. We were fortunate to be able to revisit the early inspirations behind the franchise and draw from them."

Batty describes the film's groundbreaking animation style as "relatively realistic." He explains, "In our earlier conversations, we were trying to figure out how robotic these guys should be. However, since in a lot of the other movies and the original show they were

very humanistic, we just decided to kind of carry on with that tradition. With no humans, our robots are the stars of the show. The story chronicles Orion's rise from being a lower-level miner to a powerful leader. You need to relate to the four central characters. So using a realistic style of animation was extremely helpful."

One thing that comes across from the level of artistic detail and care displayed on the screen is how passionate the members of the team feel about the movie. "I feel like with the time that we had and with the amount of energy we put into this project, it's the best that it could possibly be, and I hope the audience feels that as well," says Scheier. "I hope people get excited by the story and the arcs of the characters, that they go on this journey and really experience the scale and the spectacle of the project."

Cooley says he is proud of the fact that he and his talented crew all came together to create this film with so much love for the franchise, something that goes back to childhood for many of them. "We created this family together, using the motto and mentality of the film, which is 'Till all are one.' My hope from day one was that this would be a *Transformers* movie that has the spirit and feeling of the cartoon many of us watched as children—that it delivers the nostalgia factor, but also offers something that you've never seen before. Most of all, I hope that the audience will be surprised by the emotions of the film, and by the new type of action we put on the screen."

PREVIOUS PAGE: Art by Bryan Jimenez
RIGHT: Art by: (line one) Mario Pata, Mario Pata, Mario Pata, Jason Scheier; (line two) Mario Pata, Mario Pata, Mario Pata, Jason Scheier; (line three) Jason Scheier, Jason Scheier, Mario Pata, Jason Scheier; (line four) Mario Pata, Mario Pata, Jason Scheier, Gerald de Jesus; (line five) Gerald de Jesus
NEXT PAGE: Art by Bryan Jimenez

ILM ELECTRIFIES THE MACHINES

The talented team at Industrial Light & Magic played a pivotal role in bringing the new incarnation of Transformers characters and their fantastic home planet, Cybertron, to animated life. This film, the studio's second fully animated project of 2024 (after *Ultraman: Rising*), was led by creative director Rob Coleman, visual effects supervisor Frazer Churchill, and animation supervisor Stephen King.

"The look of this film is something special; with vibrant colors and realistic lighting and textures, the ILM team developed a stunning visual style for the characters and the environments," says Coleman.

LEFT: Art by: (top line) Adam Ely, Gerald de Jesus; (bottom line) Gerald de Jesus, Jason Scheier

BACK TO THE FUTURE

"This was the first fully animated film that I've worked on, because I come from a visual effects background," says Churchill, whose many credits include *The Creator*, *Thor: Love and Thunder*, and *Fast & Furious*. "It's one of those great opportunities when you get to build a complete world from the ground up. As kids, we would sit in our rooms, draw, dream, and make things. So this was a natural extension of that, and we got to play in this amazing sandbox."

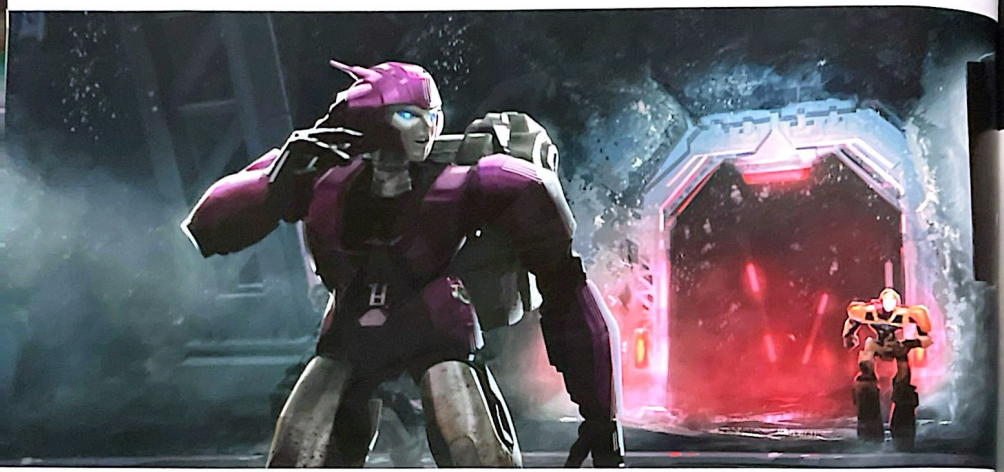
Churchill says he embraced Cooley and Scheier's choice of going back to the franchise's G1 design. "We paid homage to the classic Japanese cartoon's simplified shapes, rather than following the live-action movies, which featured complex sliding plates and metallic spaces."

He explains that the combination of the detailed metal surfaces used for the main characters' faces and bodies and the vivid, colorful environments formed the movie's special visual style. "The next step was determining the type of CG cameras and lensing we needed for the project," he says. "We discussed these choices with Batty, and we landed on this cinematic, vintage kind of lensing, which, paired with the colors and the tangibility of the characters, resulted in a very fresh overall look for the picture."

ABOVE: Art by Gerald de Jesus
RIGHT: Art by ABC and Jason Scheier

"One of the things I loved about the G1 designs was they had a polymorphic sort of face design. They weren't overly complicated or over-designed. I love to anthropomorphize and inject a humanoid presence into objects."

—JASON SCHEIER, PRODUCTION DESIGNER



"One of our main guiding directives from Cooley was for the main characters not to move like humans, not like people in mo-cap suits," says King. "Their movements had to be robotic. However, they needed to emote in a way that the audience could connect with them. They still needed to project emotions, and their faces needed the details and subtleties of the humans' faces. So we needed to take the actors' performances and make them work for these characters." King, whose works include visually spectacular live-action movies such as *The Avengers*, *The Batman*, and *Jurassic World*, is no stranger to the world of these giant robots. The ILM veteran also worked as an animator on four live-action Transformers movies (*Revenge of the Fallen*, *Dark of the Moon*, *Age of Extinction*, and *The Last Knight*). "Transforming our main characters from their biped mode into cars or other things is always tricky. In live-action movies, a lot of the work is done with cuts, but a fully animated feature allows us to play with things a little more so you can actually see and feel more of the transformation. One of the great things about the art design of these Transformers is that every piece that exists on the standing version of them has a place on the car version. It was [like] picking apart pieces of a LEGO toy and re-forming it."

ABOVE: Art by Gerald de Jesus
RIGHT: Art by ABC

THIS PAGE: Art by ABC
RIGHT, TOP: Art by Jason Scheier
RIGHT, INSET: Art by ABC
RIGHT, BOTTOM: Art by Bryan Jimenez

THE EMOTIONAL LIVES OF TRANSFORMERS

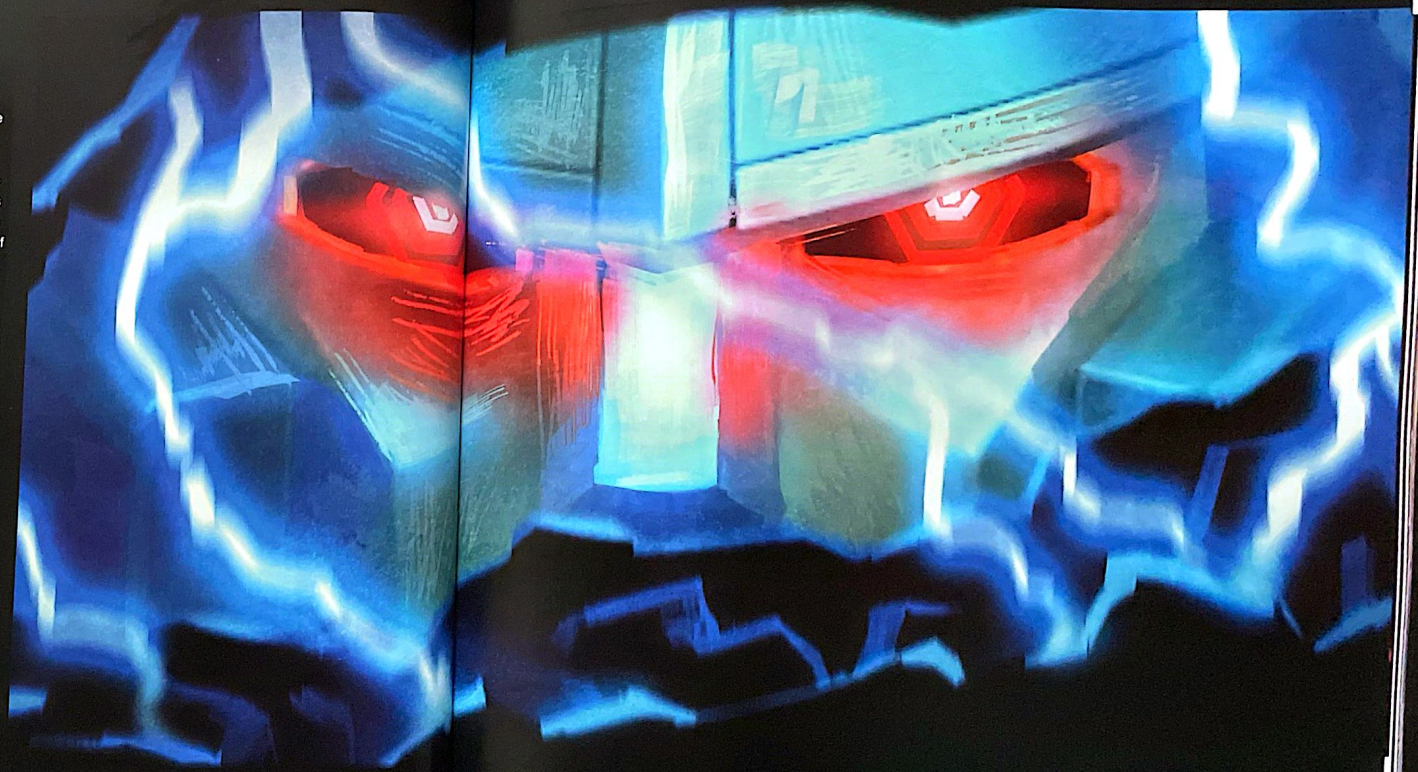
King points out that the film's emotionally rich story line allowed the team at ILM to explore the subtle levels of acting required from the humanoid machines. "We really had to work on our acting chops!" he says. "The progression of the characters throughout the movie was another big challenge. They start out as second-class citizens in the mines, but then they evolve. They also get bigger, carry more responsibilities and develop new abilities, and face more complicated issues and developments in their lives. As they look for the Matrix of Leadership talisman, they embark on an exciting adventure, but the weight of what they uncover really changes them too."

Because most of the robots have helmets that cut off their eyebrow area, it was even more of a challenge for their faces to convey human emotion. "Our director wanted us to save their blinks because we also needed to stay away from making them too human," explains King. "The blinks were reserved for the super-emotional scenes. They close their eyes for that bit so it would register. What we were able to do is to play with the little irises, which resemble camera lenses and apertures. We used dilations to convey what the character was thinking, so you get a clear sense [in each] scene."

He adds, "In D-16's case, the character has these octagonal shapes, and because we don't really see his brows, we use those shapes to tell emotions. For example, when he was shocked or sad, we'd have them tilted up in a way that would mimic eyebrow movements. When he was angry, we'd angle them downward for that additional layering of emotion.

"As a big fan of the series and having spent many hours playing with Transformers toys as a kid, I got chills when I saw the first initial layout for the movie," recalls King. "We all wanted to do justice to this story and these iconic characters [that] everyone knows. We wanted to make it as epic and thrilling as possible, to make the audience feel the weight of every punch and get swept up by every cool move."

RIGHT: Art by Gerald de Jesus



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

The ILM team's background in working on some of the biggest sci-fi and fantasy movies of all time was a huge help in fleshing out the backdrops and CG-animated central characters of the project.

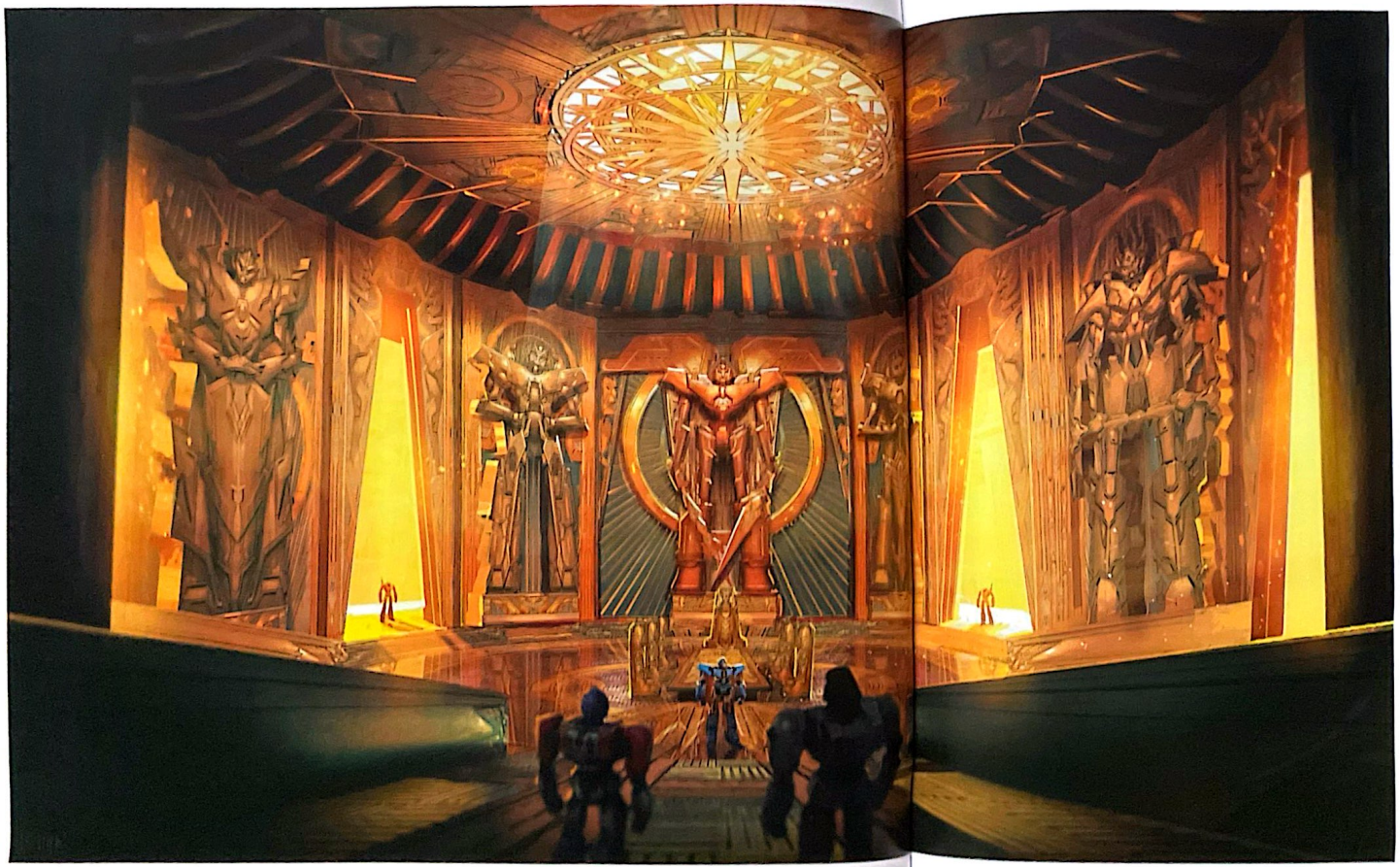
"One of the qualities that makes the movie stand out is that we were able to take our visual effects background at ILM and apply it to this fully animated movie," King says. "We asked ourselves, 'How can we make it a little more photoreal?' and 'How can we make the most of our lighting, compositing, and animation abilities to tell this story better?'"

The level of care and detail used to light every scene in the movie is another source of pride for Churchill and his team. "We used classic backlighting techniques to make everything look really cinematic," Churchill notes. "The detailed texture work and lighting look ended up being quite unique visually. Because we come from visual effects backgrounds, we are grounded in realism, so we went the extra mile to render the surfaces. Yes, it had its own challenges because of the level of detail and formality involved, but I'm so proud of the results. A lot of thought went into lighting up the metal characters so you

"The talented team at ILM was involved from the very beginning of our movie. The animators were able to really flex their animation skills, not just on specific shots, but for full sequences, where they really sold the acting of these characters beautifully."

—JOSH COOLEY, DIRECTOR

RIGHT: Art by Jason Scheier



can really see their surfaces. They end up looking beautiful and dramatic against all the environments because you're not hampered by live-action topography. You can create some fantastical lighting setups that really make the characters stand out and look amazing. It's about not being constrained by what has been done before."

"It's only fitting that when you have such a compelling story that fully honors the original material, the visuals also have to rise to the occasion," says Coleman. Indeed, the astounding amount of CG world-building and innovative character animation created by ILM is in perfect harmony with the craftsmanship on display from every department that brought the story to animated life.

"Of course, this is not squash-and-stretch animation, and it's not Disney or the *Spider-Verse* movies. It certainly lives in its own universe."

—STEPHEN KING,
ILM ANIMATION SUPERVISOR

LEFT: Art by Jason Scheier
NEXT PAGE: Art by Jason Scheier

ICONIC CHARACTERS

The eclectic and unforgettable robots of the *Transformers* universe are reimagined as CG-animated characters with their own special skills, origin stories, and hopes and fears in the new movie. While the project's imaginative artistic team members were inspired by the original characters introduced in the toy line and classic 1980s animated series, they also put their own special spins on the cool citizens of Cybertron.

THE FOUR CENTRAL CHARACTERS

Production designer Jason Scheier points out that the design of the four main characters—Orion, D-16, Elita, and Bumblebee, especially Orion—had to be done before building the whole backdrop of the movie.

"We needed to build the character lineup, so [director Josh Cooley] and I began talking about the proportions," Scheier says. "I looked at the original G1 cartoon, and thought the characters looked great, but they had these fifty-fifty proportions. The upper torso and the bottom feet were always very balanced and equal. I looked at a lot of anime, where the length of the legs is exaggerated, the torso is kept smaller, and the feet are just a little bit bigger and wider. This makes the characters feel like a big trapezoid with a built-in sense of heroism."

Scheier praises the work of ILM's art director Amy Beth Christenson Smith, who was the lead character designer on the movie. "It was a blessing to meet her, because she is a superfan and helped us really stay true to the original cartoons. Our art director Gerald [Gerry] de Jesus and I were in complete lockstep with her and her team, which included Evan Whitefield and Chris Voy."

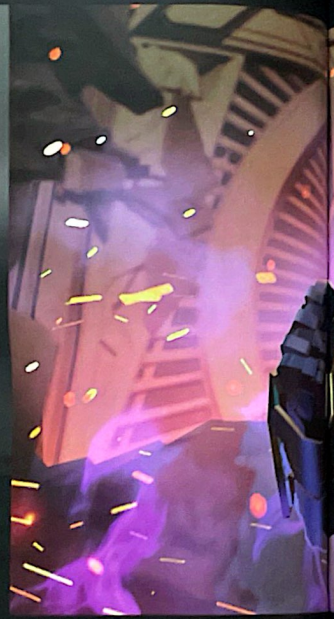
ABOVE: Art by ILM

ORION PAX/OPTIMUS PRIME

The lead protagonist of *Transformers One*, Orion Pax (Optimus Prime), begins his cinematic journey as a miner bot who dreams of greater things. His friendship with D-16 (Megatron) is the key relationship of the movie—and one that leads to a powerful confrontation in the third act.

When envisioning Orion Pax, the filmmakers were keen on staying true to the toyetic origins of the character while bringing the designs up to date for today's sophisticated animation audiences.

"It was fun to see this early version of Optimus Prime in the movie," says Cooley. "We've always seen him as this heroic, stoic figure—and Orion will eventually become that. For us, it was interesting to show him a little bit younger with a more rebellious attitude. He is just shooting from the hip and is more fun than Megatron, who is used to following the rules. To see how they rub against each other was an interesting dynamic."

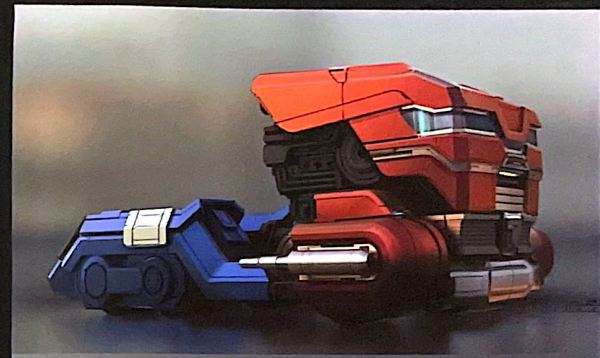


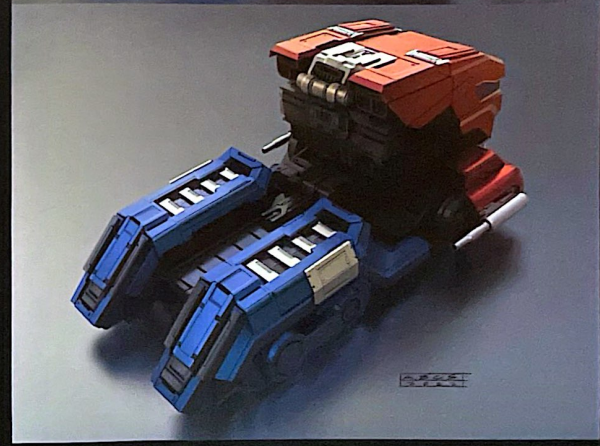
Producer Lorenzo di Bonaventura agrees. "We can see easily how Orion and D-16 are the best of friends, but they have very different outlooks on life," he says. "D-16 would prefer just to follow the road as he's being told. Orion Pax is a dreamer. He wants to see the world. He believes that there's something better out there for him and for others."

ABOVE, LEFT AND MIDDLE: Art by ABC
ABOVE, RIGHT: Art by ABC and Jason Scheier

Finding the perfect voice for Orion Pax was an exciting and challenging venture for actor Chris Hemsworth. "We wanted to honor the legacy of what longtime Optimus Prime voice actor Peter Cullen had done, but we did want to do something different and unique," di Bonaventura notes. "Of course, the character also was a younger version of what we know as Optimus Prime, so it did have to have a different vocal quality and different rhythm to it. All told, that was a fun and creative journey to map out."

Christenson Smith, an in-demand concept artist and art director who has worked on *The Mandalorian*, *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*, *Young Jedi Adventures*, and *Star Wars: The Bad*





Batch, says she jumped at the chance to work on the movie. She and her younger brother were huge fans of *The Transformers* animated show on TV. "One of the amazing things about this project was that everyone else was also an old '80s fan from the get-go," Christenson Smith notes. "We were all nerding out from the very first second of the first meeting."

One of the art team's directives was to steer clear from anything that didn't look clean and sharp. "They really wanted all the colors to pop," she says. "We also needed to emphasize the silhouettes of the main characters, so they would all be recognizable from five miles away. I knew that Jason and Gerry were leaning into Art Deco for the buildings, so I wanted to bring that to the design of the characters as well. If you look closely at the details of the main characters, you'll notice some of the same style of geometry and lines on them."

Orion was the first character Christenson Smith worked on for the movie. "Josh had this great idea that in the beginning of the movie, we were going to approach [Orion] and D-16 as miners," she explains. "They should feel similar because they're friends, and friends tend to look and sound alike. That's how I stepped back a little bit and tried to think of what they'd look like as gawky teenagers."

She stayed true to Orion's 1980s roots. "We wanted to be faithful to those previous versions of the characters. I remember Orion Pax in the original animated series. But we also wanted to give the audience a new version at the same time. In the transformation scenes, there was also the desire to retain the look of real wheels, trucks, and other vehicles, but also bring in a bit of alien-world feel to them."

ABOVE: Art by Gerald de Jesus
RIGHT, TOP AND BOTTOM: Art by ABC

D-16/MEGATRON

The yin to Orion's yang, D-16 begins his journey as a loyal friend. "He's a scrappy, smart hardworking character who really likes to follow the rules," says actor Brian Tyree Henry, who gives voice to the character. "He isn't as precocious and inquisitive about why things are the way they are as Orion Pax is. He does aspire to be more, but he's not going to cross the line, and he really hates injustice. But when he becomes disillusioned and realizes that what he's believed all his life has been a lie, you can see this absolute change in him. I just wanted the audience to really care about that, and to see that he's championing for things to be right. Of course, then it's heartbreaking to watch him become the villain. But he believes what he's doing is right, and it's for the good of all bot-kind."

Scheier says he and his team wanted to inject a humanoid presence into D-16's visuals. "We wanted to be respectful of the Generation 1 faceplates, and earlier on, our four main characters don't have cogs, so they don't have the ability to transform. When we see them at first, they are more rounded, and as they evolve through the story, they begin to become more angular and stronger. We were looking at everything from simple shapes to more complex ones, and including circles, squares, and triangles into the design language."

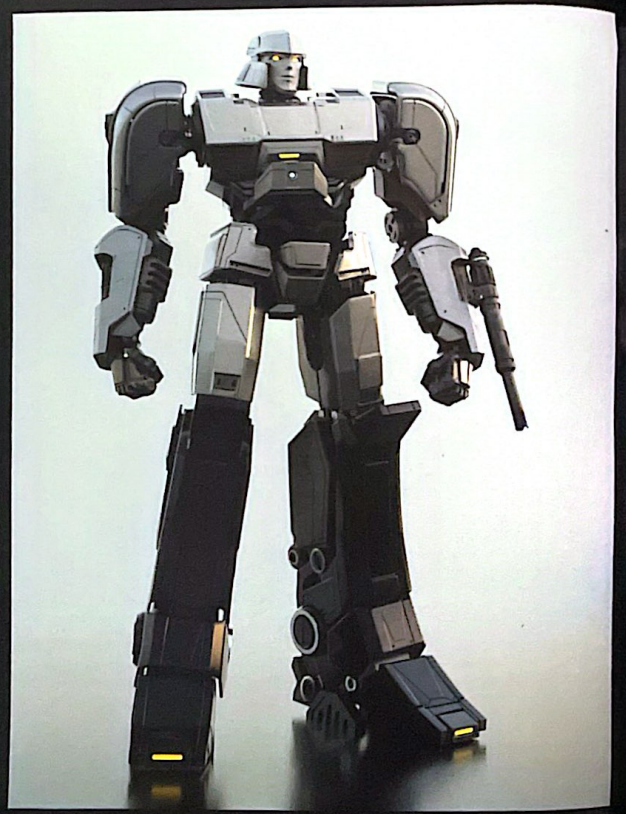
Specific color identity also played a huge role in designing D-16. "A lot of the initial work came down to establishing this color identity," explains Scheier. "If you look at Optimus, for example, he has the red, silverish, and blue metallic colors. There's also always this little complementary accent of yellow around his beltline. For D-16, you have those fierce red eyes; big, iconic shoulders; and those giant black feet."

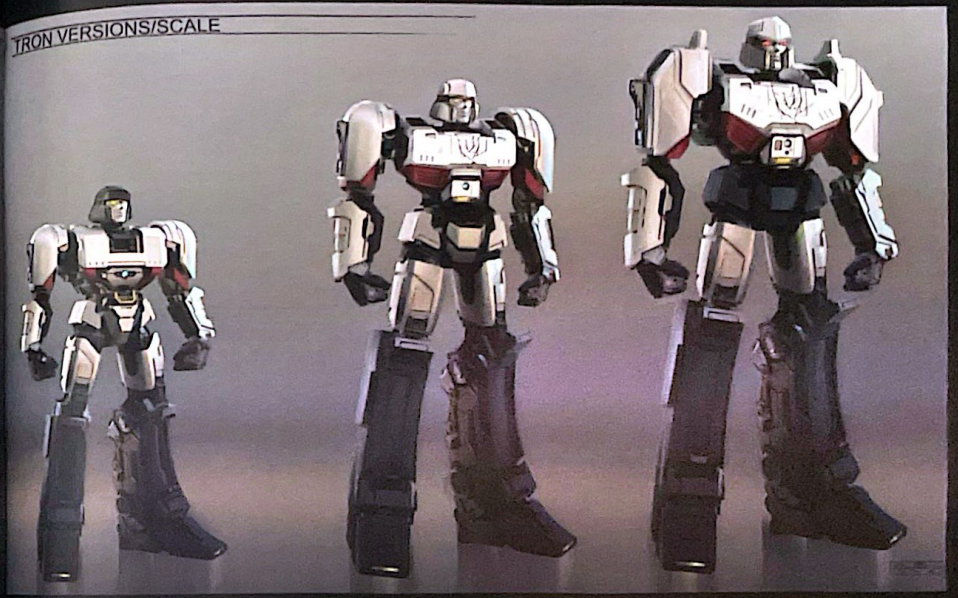
ABOVE, LEFT AND MIDDLE: **Art by ABC**
ABOVE: **Art by Jason Scheier**

Another important element was the character's surface sheen. "We're in a pure metallic world," says Scheier, "so once D-16 and the other three main characters go from miner bots to this alt version after they get their transformation cogs, we wanted them to look and feel like brand-new cars. Their paint becomes more metallic and shinier. They feel like they just left the showroom floor. You can feel that in the design as well."

Both physically and mentally, D-16/Megatron goes through the biggest transition of any character in the movie. "He goes from being the good guy/best friend to the villain, so we needed to translate that into the biggest visual change as well," says Christenson Smith. "You'll notice that he gets the most changes in color, shape, and size. He goes from really rounded shapes to harder, rectangular ones."

Fans will notice that the character wears a black helmet in the early part of the movie. "That was a callback to the original comics and artwork," says Christenson Smith. "Of course, everyone knew that the black helmet was taken from the original version of the character. So I was very happy that the helmet color remained the same."





LEFT: Art by Chris Voy
ABOVE: Art by ABC

ELITA

We first see Elita as the strong female leader of Orion and D-16's mining crew. She gets into trouble when Orion breaks protocol to save Jazz from a crashing tunnel. Voiced by Scarlett Johansson, Elita has a playful relationship with Orion, but she's also the embodiment of skill, logic, and reason throughout the movie.

"It was very important for Elita not to be a side character or someone who just leaned into the frame and said something funny," says Cooley. "When I approached Scarlett to play this role, I just knew she would nail it. I really wanted this character to have a major impact on the story. Orion can only become Optimus with her support and guidance."

"Early on in the movie, we see how Elita has been wrangling the troops and keeping everybody in line," says Scheier. "Then very quickly, she *becomes* in charge of the group. You'll find as they get to the surface, Elita *protects them* and looks out for them, and also inspires them to move forward. *Later on*, there's a sequence in the story called 'All Is Lost,' where the tides *turn for our four* main characters. That's when Elita comes in and motivates Orion *Pax to become* the leader he's supposed to become."

Elita was one of Christenson Smith's favorite characters in the franchise because when she was a young girl it was exciting to see a fun and dynamic female character in an action-driven cartoon. She was delighted to have the opportunity to work on the character for *Transformers One*. "I thought it was a very cool assignment because I got to create a new alt mode for her vehicle design," she notes. "Elita becomes a car in the toy version of the franchise, but it was so much fun to get her to transform into a big, shiny motorcycle in the *movie* because I come from a big motorcycle family myself. I enjoyed the *opportunity to* bring a strong female character into this new

ABOVE, LEFT: *Art by ABC*
RIGHT: *Art by Bryan Jimenez*

Transformers world. The writing and acting were so great, and that needed to come across visually as well."

For Christenson Smith, it was important to balance the character's femininity with her power, athleticism, and fighting skills. "I think you look at her and it's obvious that she's a female robot, but the lines and silhouettes also hint at how fast and strong she is," says Christenson Smith. "When you see her fighting in the movie, you totally buy it, and you can see that she also uses speed as a real asset against the enemies."

From the beginning, the artist's designs for the character resembled the actress who speaks for her. "I heard a rumor about [Johansson] voicing the character early on, but I tried not to get my hopes up," says Christenson Smith. "When I was drawing the character, I was pulling from her physical characteristics subconsciously. She is so great in action movies, and I just love her personality and sarcasm. I wanted to make sure that every line and shape would convey that."

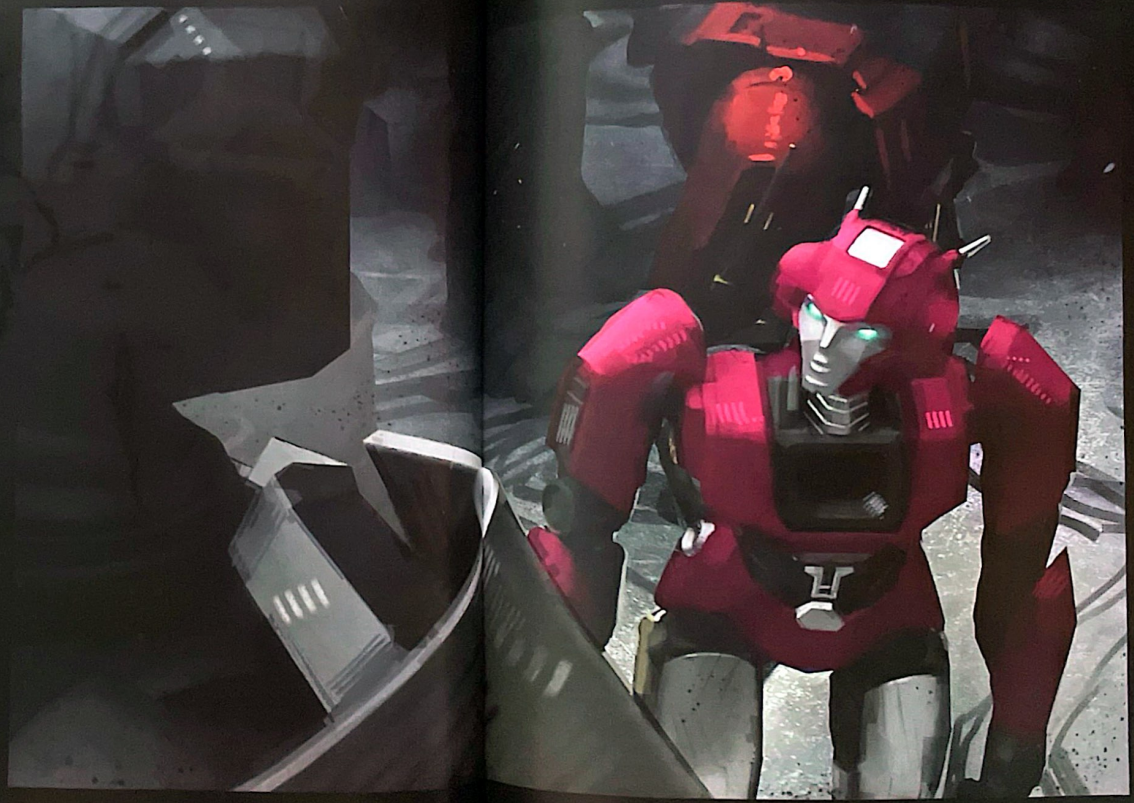
According to the film's head of layout, Chris Batty, Elita was a dynamic character throughout the picture. "She's a true warrior and a real fighter," he says. "We tried to make her look good and come up with a lot of special angles to present her action sequences. There are some great shots of her either running through the train or athletically bounding around. During the attack-on-the-camp sequence, she delivers lots of great half transformations and drive-throughs and takes a lot of bodies out. So we just try to stay low and make her as heroic as possible."

Producer Mark Vahradian believes Elita is one of the most interesting characters in the movie. "She has this ferocity about her, and she's a pessimist," he says. "But at the same time, she decides that they'll have a chance to fight their way to victory, despite all their liabilities. She's not a dreamer like Orion, but she believes in her own power and her own ability to change things."

Vahradian says his favorite moment of the movie is when all is lost, and Bee and D-16 have been taken away by the bad guys. Even Orion has lost his optimism. "That's when she gives him a pep talk that's the most pragmatic, honest thing he needs to hear," he says. "It's coming from her heart. She acknowledges that the world needs optimism, and that he is the one to bring it. I think that's a great message for the times we're living in. I hope that it will resonate with the film's audiences, especially with the kids out there."

"My favorite thing about Elita is her great, sarcastic sense of humor. I love the biting comments she makes even during the most dangerous situations. She's very confident in herself and knows she's good at what she does, and that's unwavering."

—SCARLETT JOHANSSON, ACTOR AND VOICE OF ELITA



LEFT: Art by Jason Scheier

B-127/BUMBLEBEE

One of the most beloved Transformers of all time, B-127 (a.k.a. Bumblebee, or Bee) makes his first appearance in the movie when Orion and D-16 are banished to Sublevel 50, described in the script as the "darkest, deepest, dankest chamber in all of Iacon City." Bee is a kind, optimistic, childlike bot with a heart of gold, who dreams of being called "Badass-a-tron."

As Cooley recalls, "We've always seen Bumblebee in the live-action movies as a silent, Charlie Chaplinesque character. But we went the opposite direction: He hasn't lost his voice yet, and we wanted him to be extremely talkative. In fact, he never stops talking, and that was the perfect character to pair up with Elita, who doesn't take any guff from anybody. So, along with Orion and D-16, we have these two pairs of characters who really play well together as a foursome."

Actor Keegan-Michael Key, who voices B-127, explains, "When we first lay eyes on him, he is a guy who works in the lowest level of Cybertron, and he works with junk metal. But what I find really appealing about him is that he always looks on the positive side of things. He has even created imaginary friends made from scrap metal parts to fight loneliness and to keep sane."

Key says Cooley wanted the character to sound like the actor himself and for the audience to hear his rhythms, timbre, and overall quality of voice. "That was interestingly liberating for me in a way," Key says. "Another thing that was interesting for me was that the movie allows us to see how Bumblebee's life was on Cybertron. In the live-action movies, we see him speak through the radio, or inside the Volkswagen Bug. That has endeared him to people, just like a classic

ABOVE, LEFT: Art by ABC
ABOVE: Art by ILM

"We used actors in motion-capture suits to help us visualize and block out some of the expository scenes—including the ones where we meet B-127 for the first time and the big rooftop climax."

—CHRIS BATTY, HEAD OF LAYOUT

silent movie star. I was really honored to have the opportunity to imbue him [with] personality and point of view through his voice."

Vahradian mentions that it was incredibly important to get Bee's voice right in the movie. "We were fortunate because Josh was friends with Keegan and had worked with him in the past. He was the first person he brought up to be cast for Bee. He brought incredible energy, spirit, and comedy to a character that had not talked in any of our movies because he's voiceless. He only speaks through clips from the radio. It was a stroke of genius to have Keegan, because he's endlessly funny. His lines are some of the funniest parts of the movie for audiences."

A huge fan of the character, designer Christenson Smith says she has owned four yellow Volkswagen Bug cars simply because of her love for Bumblebee. "He has always been my favorite character from the original cartoon series," she says. "When I first saw the 1986 animated movie . . . the second I thought that Bumblebee was dead I asked my mom to take me out of the movie theater."

Christenson Smith says she enjoyed coming up with all the facial expressions for B-127. "With Bee, I could get a lot crazier with all his happy and bright expressions. I also had to bring in kind of a UFO look to his *Transformers* car version. In addition to the yellow exterior, he has this alien-like blue window and blue lights. It was all about going to the start and iterating on top of what we had to deliver the perfect final design for each character, which also matched their post-transformation looks."

LEFT: Art by ILM

NEW AND FAMILIAR FACES

For die-hard fans of the franchise, one of the distinct pleasures of the new movie is revisiting familiar characters and learning new details about long-forgotten lore. As they set out to design the ancillary and supporting characters in the movie, the creators put new spins on their overall physical characteristics and outfits, while tipping their hats to the classic players in the 1980s TV cartoon.

SENTINEL PRIME

Since he was introduced in issue no. 65 of Marvel's *Transformers* comic book series in 1990, Sentinel Prime has taken on numerous shapes and personalities. In the comics, he was the leader of the Autobots and held the powerful Matrix of Leadership before Optimus Prime. He has also been cast as Optimus Prime's mentor and friend. In *Transformers One*, he is a complicated character responsible for many of the film's unexpected twists and turns, and perfectly voiced by Jon Hamm.

"We wanted to portray him as a self-proclaimed hero, and we wanted to showcase his nobility, regal nature, and gleaming colors on full display against the backdrop of Iacon City," explains Scheier. "Our goal was to encompass his self-adulation [through the] exaggeration of design in his armor and the materials being indigo blue and golden. He's an example of a villain masquerading as a hero—he is a Prime, but on closer inspection he's not all that he's made himself out to be. We wanted our audience to believe in his regalness and feel his power when he occupied the frame. It was important to see his connection to the past, when the Primes protected Cybertron, through his design language. Carvings of Sentinel could be found everywhere all over Iacon City, from the Well of All Sparks to the Hall of Primes."

Christenson Smith adds, "There have been so many varied and different design color palettes, and alt modes for Sentinel Prime throughout the franchise [that] we had to pay a lot of attention to how we visualized him for the movie. We needed to have a lot of back-and-forths to find the similarities between his previous versions—even if it was just a broad visual concept, like proportion and weight—and doing something new and different for his character that captured his backstory and personality."

One of the main visuals that was retained from other versions was the blue-and-gold palette, which stayed true to the character's 1980s cartoon version. "It also felt the most regal," says Christenson Smith. "I incorporated the idea of his oversized shoulder pauldrons, wings, and built-in weaponry from some of his previous incarnations. Overall, his design had more of an Art Deco influence than any of the others. This helped him feel the most integrated into Iacon and the environments, and was a nod to Sentinel being from a different age altogether."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier

AIRACHNID

Originally conceived as a cruel and selfish Decepticon who has a penchant for seeking endangered alien species only to destroy and collect them as trophies, Airachnid is conceived as Sentinel Prime's second-in-command. The film's designers were keen on staying true to the character's traditional look, both as a robot and as a helicopter. They also wanted to stay away from any similarities to Blackarachnia, another spiderlike villainess who originated in *Beast Wars*.

"The biggest updates to her design were ones that made her feel even more spiderlike, such as elongating her head to mimic arachnid anatomy and adding the extra camera eyes," says Christenson Smith. "In updating her alt mode, we added guards around the rotor blades to give her a more modern, drone-like appearance. Incorporating those guards into her transformation informed a lot of her bot visuals, as the rotors and guards become her robotic spider-leg attachments. It also contributed to the idea of Airachnid having blades for legs, which worked out well as a design element for her character and enabled her transformation to be more straightforward."

TOP: Art by Lun Ying
BOTTOM: Art by Gerald de Jesus

JAZZ

Known primarily as a fifteen-foot-tall, good-natured Cybertronian, Jazz first shows up in the movie during the big explosion scene in the mines. Christenson Smith knew that the character needed to have a very distinctive look, so she tried to capture that in every way possible and incorporate his good-natured personality into his overall appearance.

"We gave each of the key characters their own motif, and for Jazz, that meant starting with his traditional cartoon and toy shapes. However, we used the most unique parts of Jazz as the main inspiration for all of his shape language. For me, those parts are his helmet and chest piece. Overall, we used very rounded shapes with some angles to break [them] up. For his final design, everything has been rounded out to match, and all the angles in his design mimic his helmet."

ALPHA TRION/A-3

Alpha Trion is one of the oldest living Transformers and was instrumental in establishing Cybertron as an independent galactic force. In the Transformers franchise, in his older years Alpha Trion becomes the sage advisor to younger robots in leadership positions (especially to Optimus Prime and Elita One). For the movie, the designers set out to play with key visuals to make him really stand out from the younger, more modern characters.

"His fight scene was going to be very action-packed, so we immediately decided to look to his lion alt mode from previous toy releases as the direction to go in," says Christenson Smith. "Everything else, even down to his face structure and the way he moved, was a nod to how Alpha Trion comes from such an ancient time in Cybertron history. It was important to work his age into his likeness and keep with the traditional look of Alpha, with his beard, horns, and headdress. I worked up the first pass and came up with the new, clean version of Alpha Trion's bot and alt-mode transformation. Chris Voy and Evan both worked on the final version, including final details and his very corroded and damaged state."

ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: Art by ABC

THE SECURITY DRONES

The security drones were designed alongside Airachnid to echo her overall physical attributes and emphasize the fact that she is in control of the drone armies. They share the same black-and-gunmetal material base and have similar aggressive-shape language, using a lot of repeating pointed and sharp edges.

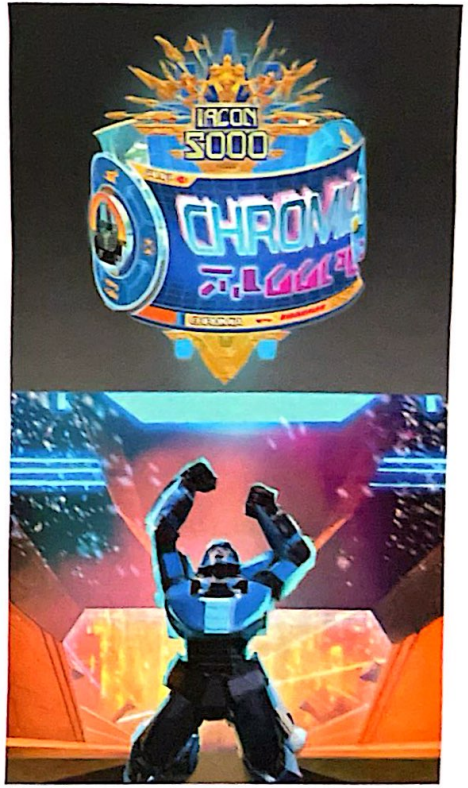
"Airachnid still needed to be easily distinguished when in the group, so creating a different silhouette, both as bots and alt modes, helps to differentiate Airachnid from the drones," says Christenson Smith. "Josh and Jason had the great idea of creating a blank face design for the drones, to back up that idea that they were created only to follow orders, and it made them more frightening. Scheier also created the color variants of the drones for their different levels of elite guard duties."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier and ABC

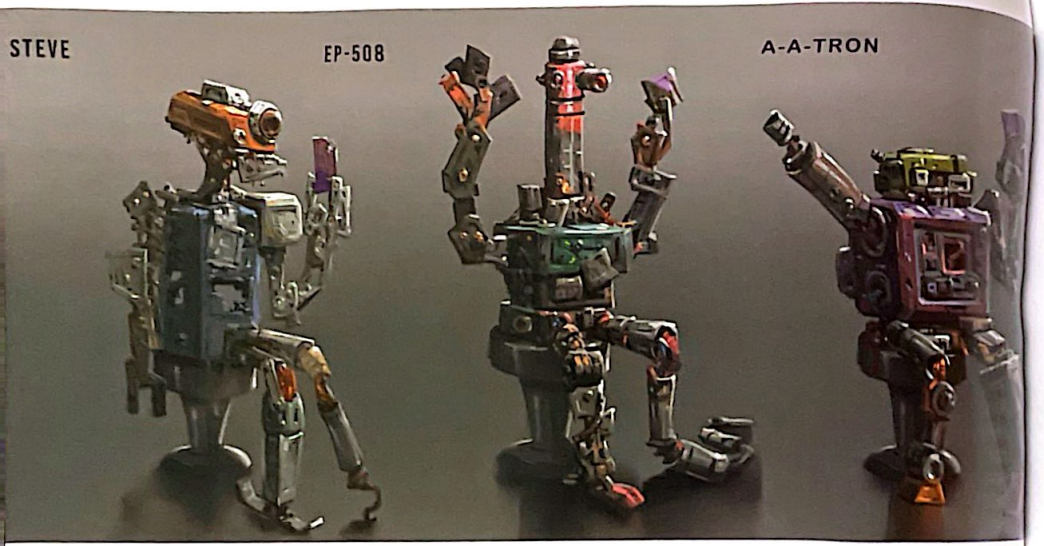
CHROMIA

Transformers One's inclusion of familiar canonical characters like Chromia, known as a tough, fiercely loyal infiltrator bot, should delight many die-hard fans of the franchise. Her updated design was part of a group of transforming characters that Voy and Christenson Smith designed for the Iacon 5000 race.

"This was our chance to add new bots with alt-mode transformation designs into the film, and we made sure to cover a variety of characters and vehicles," says Christenson Smith. "Over time, some



ABOVE, TOP: Art by Gerald de Jesus
ABOVE, BOTTOM: Art by Jason Scheier



of these evolved to become canon characters like Chromia and Darkwing. Chromia's head and helmet were designed so that the visor and mask could deploy over the face, acting like a kind of motorcycle helmet for the race."

Voy designed the lively graphics on their outfits so that the racers would feel like specialized, sponsored athletes. Every design, especially Chromia's, was intentionally oversized and bulky, to make them feel much more powerful than the mining versions of Orion Pax and D-16.

"As a big fan of the 1980s cartoon female Autobots, I was happy to get to design them for the film as miners and background characters, and especially pleased that Chromia got to be in the spotlight," adds Christenson Smith.

BEE'S STEVE AND OTHER "WILSONS"

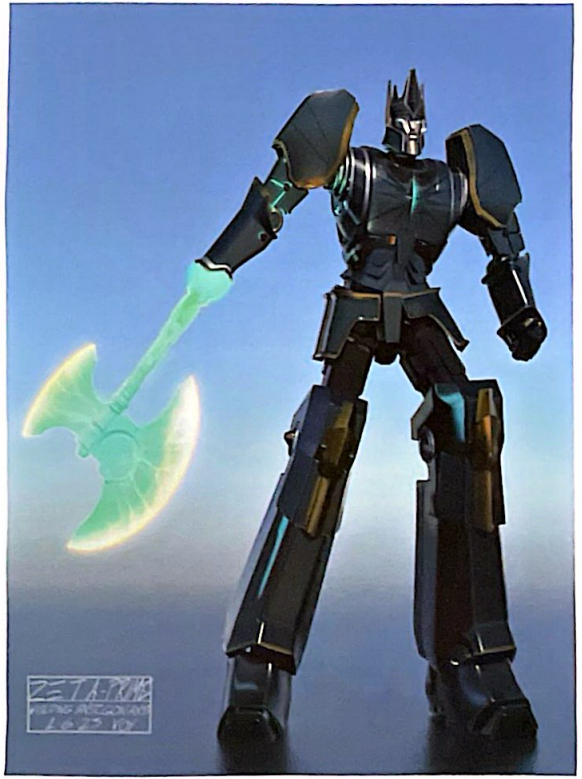
B-127 was kept in Sublevel 50 all by himself for so long that he built three "friends" for himself from scratch. "We did a lot of work to come up with these three characters," Scheier explains. "I remember they ended up being too anthropomorphic in one of the first passes. These imaginary friends looked like robots that could just get up and move. I had a lot of early discussions with Josh, and he thought we should

ABOVE: Art by Mario Pata

make them look like sculptures made of inanimate objects that are literally fused and welded together haphazardly. We looked at a wide variety of metallic, robot-like sculptures for inspiration. I remembered a guy that comes to a swap meet near my house and makes *Star Wars* characters out of spark plugs and weird pieces of trash—I always thought it was interesting when people take ordinary, discarded objects and make something cool out of them."

ZETA PRIME

As with Sentinel Prime, there are numerous versions of Zeta throughout the *Transformers* franchise. There are even some design crossovers between Sentinel and Zeta, so to keep them visually separate, the design team decided to lean into the differences between the two bots. "The goal was to set them apart visually and to make them feel extremely ancient so that each Prime is inspired by different historical themes," Christenson Smith explains. "Chris Voy's design of Zeta Prime was very much inspired by the idea of King Arthur and medieval knight armor in general." That's why the final rendition has a built-in crown, includes the look and feel of a beard, and appears quite stoic overall.



ABOVE: Art by Chris Voy

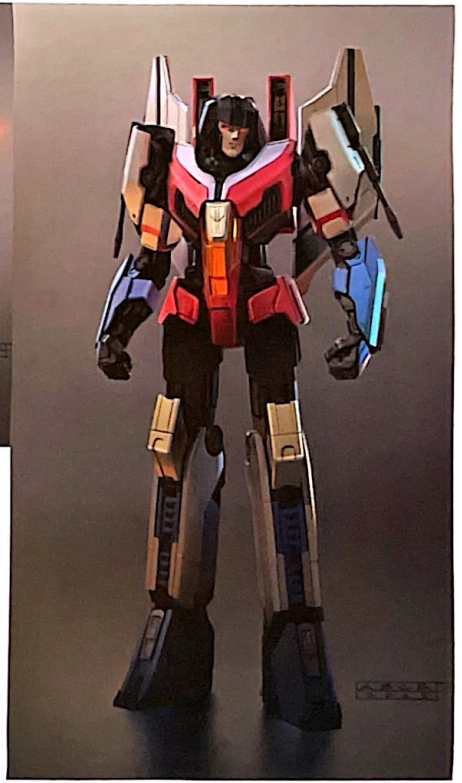
QUINTESSON HIGH COMMANDER

The scheming and manipulative leader of the Quintessons, a strange and ancient alien race that shows up in the world of Transformers from time to time, has been the source of nightmares for many young viewers of the TV series. The very early movie sketches for the Commander and the soldiers were similar to the cartoon designs, but they quickly evolved to become more organic and alienlike. "We started to look more and more at crustacean and insect carapaces and muscle tissue," says Christenson Smith. "The silhouette of the Commander needed to be very distinguished, so that design incorporated very long, jagged spikes, and tentacles that were mutated and split. The Quintesson designs really stayed with me even as a kid because of how alien and creepy they were!"

THE SOLDIER QUINTESSONS

The soldier Quintessons were all designed at the same time and went through the same visual evolution as their commander. Christenson Smith had originally designed them in a way that allowed them to collapse down into a solid egg shape, but that transformation didn't make it into the final version of the film. "However, the smoother and rounder shapes stayed in the final design," she says. "Overall, they share a lot in common with the Commander, but they are meant to feel more factory-grown, with more cybernetic parts. They're more symmetrical and straightforward in design."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier

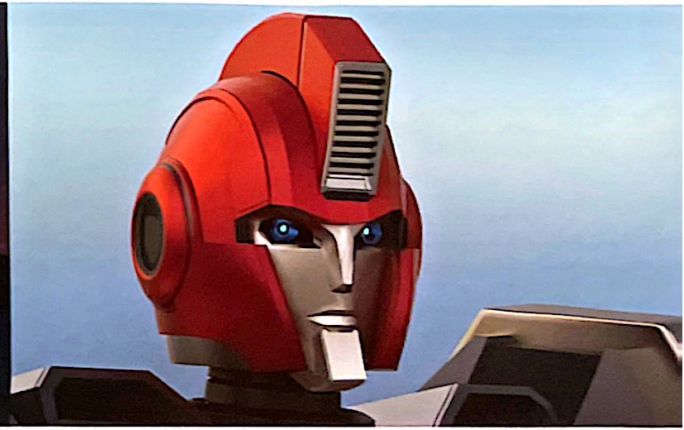


STARSCREAM

Another popular figure from the 1980s cartoon, Starscream is often portrayed as a villainous and cowardly air commander who schemes to overthrow Megatron and become the leader of the Decepticons. Voiced perfectly by Steve Buscemi in the movie, Starscream captures Orion, D-16, Elita, and Bee to seek information on the Energon trains and gain access to the mines and anything that would hurt Sentinel Prime.

"Ultimately, the design of Starscream was very true to his original 1980s version, and any changes to his final design were largely based on the updated design of his jet mode and how he would transform," says Christenson Smith. "I had such a great time with every aspect of his design, but the best part about working on Starscream was making his expression sheet and capturing his snarky, arrogant personality. I honestly couldn't wait to design Starscream for *Transformers One* because he and Soundwave were my favorite Decepticons!"

ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: Art by ABC



SOUNDWAVE

Often deemed one of the most popular villains in the franchise, Soundwave is known as the Decepticons' communications officer and one of Megatron's main supporters. "Soundwave is easily one of the most iconic characters in *Transformers*, so it was important to stay faithful to his traditional look," says Christenson Smith. "While I'm a huge fan of the boom box, we needed to update his alt mode into a weaponized vehicle, and Josh and Jason had the great idea to use sound as a main component. Like some of his previous alt-mode versions, Soundwave became a hover vehicle with sonic-based powers and weapons. We could take advantage of his speaker visuals and keep them front and center. Voy did the final design for Soundwave's bot, alt-mode transformations."

ABOVE, LEFT: Art by Chris Voy

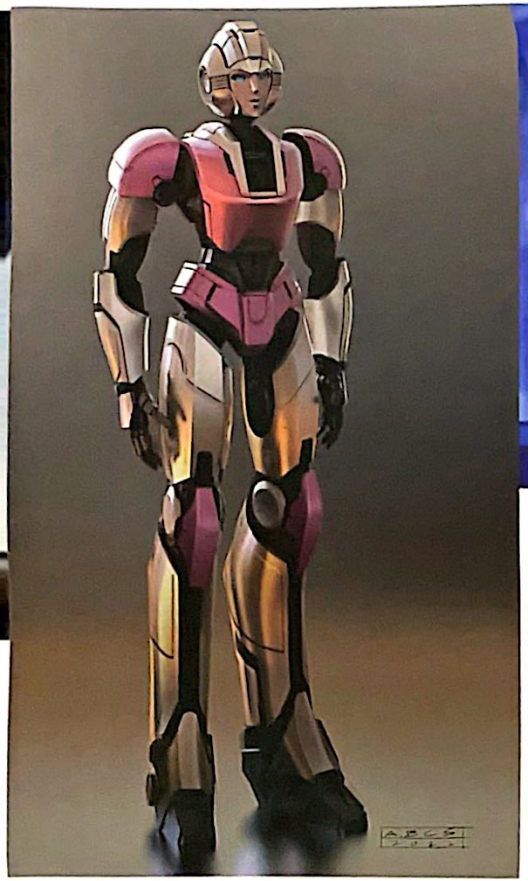
DARKWING

Originally designed as a Decepticon mercenary with Dreadwing, Darkwing is reimagined for the movie as one of the full-size Transformers that are in charge of disciplining Elita, Orion, and D-16 in the first act of the movie. He also shows up at the race. "Like Chromia, Darkwing started out as an all-new transforming-character design, originally for the race," says Christenson Smith. "His design was created by Voy, and as that character became prominent in the story, Scheier and the team at Paramount and at Hasbro customized the look, including giving him that spectacular 1980s-era color palette as a reference to his original look. Being one of the bulkiest and most oversized characters that we designed, [Darkwing's] way [of towering] over Orion Pax and D-16 is in perfect harmony with his overbearing, bullying persona."

IRONHIDE

Ironhide, who was originally known as the Autobots' resident weapon specialist, got both a miner/precog design as well as a Transformers design treatment for the movie. He appears briefly in a scene confronting Darkwing, who is trying to force the miners to work continuously to get more Energon. Voy came up with Ironhide's final design for the movie, pushing the visual motifs for the character by using straight edges and repeating rectangles wherever possible.

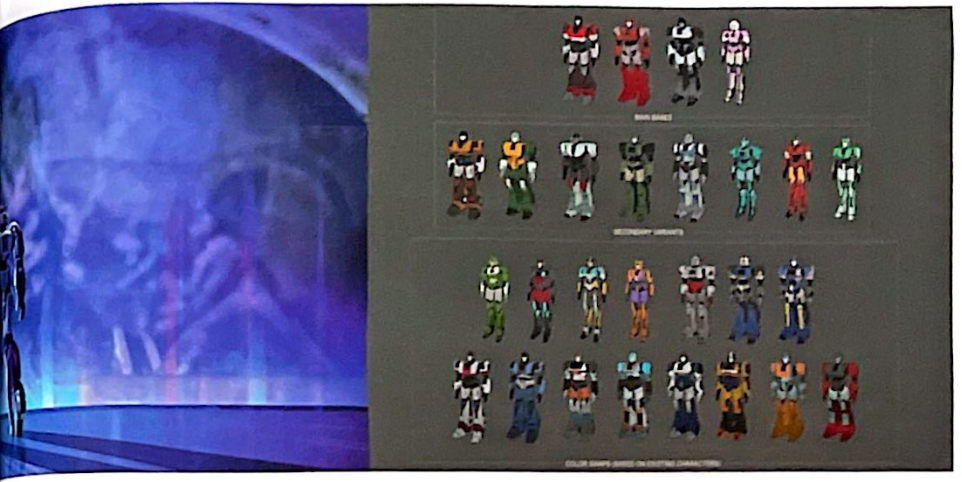
ABOVE, MIDDLE: Art by Gerald de Jesus
ABOVE, RIGHT: Art by ABC



ARCEE

The short and nimble female Autobot field commander, Arcee, underwent a design update that also stayed true to her previous iterations. "I relied on very rounded shapes with swooping curves and included a nod to her backpack from the original toys, which is part of her car transformation," says Christenson Smith. "I mostly concentrated on her helmet to try and integrate it with her face as much as possible. One of my favorite parts about Arcee is her visor, so I also wanted to showcase that in her design. She can slide up the visor into the helmet when it's not in use."

LEFT: Art by ABC



GENERAL MINER BOTS/ AUTOBOTS

Because the mining robots become the Autobots, the goal was to try and include as many recognizable characters from past shows and movies on-screen as possible. To achieve this, designer Christenson Smith came up with a kit of interchangeable parts. They started with a base of torso, arms, and legs, and then emphasized the most recognizable/unique parts for the individual characters—like chest pieces, faces, and helmets.

"I created a library for male and female Autobot base bodies and a library of interchangeable faces and made sure that the connection points were the same on all designs so that any helmet would fit on any head and so forth," explains Christenson Smith. "This approach let us get at least a dozen completely different and unique geometry variations. Then we could swap colors and add or remove details like masks and visors for a much broader library of characters. I did an initial pass of some of my favorite characters, and Scheier and his team added even more color variants. We did the same for the Seekers. I think it makes it fun for the fans to try and find their old favorites from the shows and movies in the crowd scenes."

ABOVE, LEFT: Art by Gerald de Jesus and Jason Scheier
ABOVE, RIGHT: Art by ABC

POST-CREDIT DECEPTICONS

Fans get one more peek at Starscream, Soundwave, and Shockwave with their Decepticon emblems after the film's credits roll at the end of the movie. "Their overall designs are the same, but it's amazing how much the lighting, poses, and expressions do to make the characters feel so much more evil and intimidating here," says Christenson Smith.

"The addition of the Decepticon emblems completes the scene and sets the tone perfectly. As a lifelong fan of *Transformers*, this scene really gave me chills!" It also gets the audience excited about more animated chapters of the saga in the future.

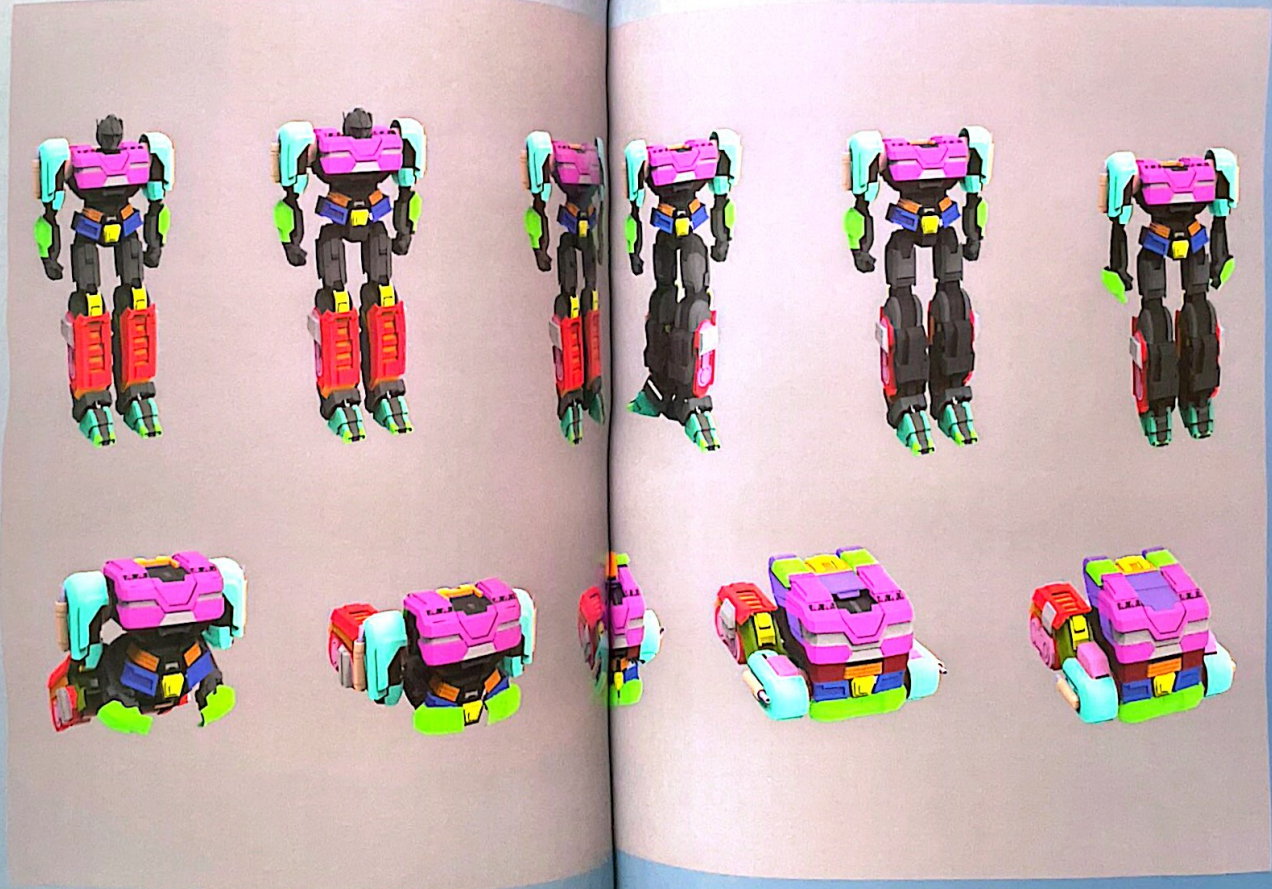
ABOVE: (top line) Gerald de Jesus; (middle) Gerald de Jesus, Jason Scheier; (bottom) Gerald de Jesus
RIGHT: Art by ABC

"One of the things that surprised me was the way our character designers were able to make characters transform from one form to another. Instead of using camera tricks to swap out the models, they were able to design them as if the characters transform into vehicles exactly as they would in real life."

—JOSH COOLEY, DIRECTOR

MAPPING OUT REALISTIC TRANSFORMATIONS

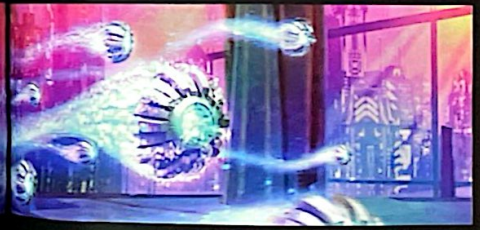
"One of the things we did on the concept design side was to make sure the main characters would actually transform to their alt vehicle forms one to one. We created the 2D art first, but I modeled all the robots and the vehicles, and then keyframed movies for reference to show how everything transformed. Once we decided on a general idea for a vehicle and the robot with Josh and Jason, then they let me figure out the transformation logistics with the concept models. In the live-action movies, you have a lot of visual density, and you can cover things up using camera tricks. In the old hand-drawn cartoon version, anything went: Megatron could transform into a tiny little gun that Starscream fires! That would *definitely* not work in our movie.



"We needed to figure out all the physical details, as the characters would be transforming and half-transforming back and forth all the time, and we couldn't cheat anything. We didn't want to use two different models and scales. The actual mass of the vehicles had to be consistent. Figuring out all these details in the concept phase was super helpful for everybody, because we gave all the little transformation movies to Josh and his story team, and Chris and his layout team. What those guys came up in terms of choreography for the battle scenes was absolutely spectacular."

—AMY BETH CHRISTENSON SMITH, CHARACTER DESIGNER AND ILM ART DIRECTOR

LEFT: Art by ABC



All art by Gerald de Jesus and Jason Scheier

BUILDING A FANTASTIC PLANET

From the bright lights of Iacon City to the dark corners of the miners' sector, *Transformers One* offers a comprehensive and unique tour of the robots' home planet of Cybertron.

"In the past, Cybertron was looked at as a very metallic and cold-feeling place. Josh showed us the variety of minerals found here on Earth, and we realized that even a planet made entirely of metal could look interesting, diverse, and organic."

—ZEV FOREMAN,
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, HASBRO

CYBERTRON

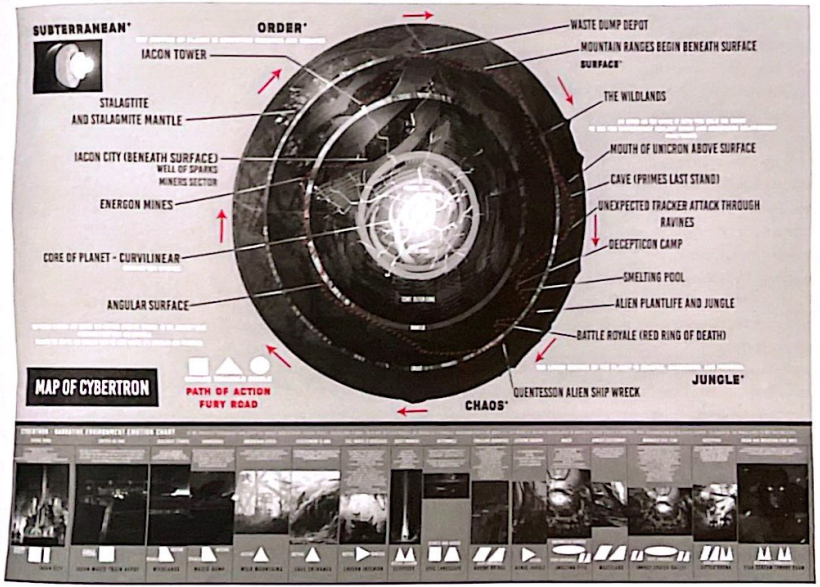
Cybertron, the home planet of the Transformers, is often depicted as shining, metallic, and tech-heavy. The artistic team behind the new animated movie wanted to stay as close as possible to the original comic book and 1980s cartoon version while putting an imaginative spin on the visuals. The planet became a completely new character of its own. "One of the things that got me excited about this film was seeing what Cybertron would look like in its heyday," director Josh Cooley says. "Since the planet's all metal, I didn't want it to be a big gray ball in the sky. It had to be something that we truly cared about. In Transformers

RIGHT: All art by Jason Scheier

lore, they are all trying to get back home to Cybertron, so we wanted to create a planet that was really appealing and had elements of our world in it. We started to think about the kind of natural disasters that could happen on this planet. If the characters could transform, why couldn't the whole planet do the same thing? So the planet has plate tectonics that just move a lot faster than ours do. Then there are metal dust storms that kick up. We have alien natural life-forms that have landed on the back side of the planet that are continuing to grow."

Production designer Jason Scheier says he and the film's art director, Gerald (Gerry) de Jesus, with whom he had worked on the award-winning series *Blue Eye Samurai*, were in lockstep throughout the entire project. The duo had already developed a great shorthand and knew what needed to be done to support the director's vision on such a massive

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier and Tim Kallok



project—and to deliver the look of the movie in only six months.

"When Jason told me he was working on this movie and wanted me to come on board, I was incredibly excited because my first toy as a kid was a Transformers toy," recalls de Jesus, whose many credits include *Maya and the Three*, *The Book of Life*, and *Teen Titans Go!* "It was basically as if he told me that I was getting free tacos and unlimited guacamole. It was just like that little kid in me woke up from a long slumber. One of the things that make this movie so exciting was the amount of variation in the environments. We were able to work on these organic materials and create this version of Cybertron that nobody has ever seen before."

In addition to revisiting Floro Dery's classic designs for the Generation 1 cartoon, the duo also sought inspiration from the work of classic UPA background designer Maurice Noble. "Josh loves the simplicity and graphic quality of Noble's designs," says Scheier. "Both Gerry and I loved that, because we have the same sensibility to keep things clean from a distance, and more detailed and ornate when you get a close-up look."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier

IACON CITY

Art Deco designs were front and center when it came to Iacon City, often depicted as the capital of Cybertron. Another strong component was "Cassette Futurism," a subset of retrofuturism based on '70s and '80s technologies and design. "We merged those two styles together and made a baby called Tech Deco," says Scheier. "It entails these unique, detailed interior panel cuts of the original architecture, but it also maintains a simple read that could be echoed into the designs of the characters."

Scheier's gaming background paired perfectly with de Jesus's experience in 2D animation as the filmmakers contemplated using modularity to create both the world's buildings and its rock surfaces. "When our forces came together, we were like a Voltron [giant super-robot]. We thought of the buildings as being made of LEGO-like parts," he explains. "Even the surface of the planet and its rocks could be repurposed and re-dressed. They have wedges, and you can rotate them to get different directions in the final version. It looks like a different rock, but it's actually the same piece that has been rotated."

Another clever strategy involved the treatment of the pedestals and tops of the buildings. For those, the art department used a strategy similar to the one for the rock formations, mixing and matching the plinths and top caps to create a wider variety of structures and edifices. "Gerry and I were creating

RIGHT: Art by Bryan Jimenez

"The pristine parts of Iacon City feature lots of golds, blues, and greens, but the miners' quarters had to look more dingy. They needed catwalks to move from one section to another, because they don't transform and they are always walking."

—AARON DEM, PRODUCER

these 2D assets and got the 3D artists involved early on," says Scheier. "We started building volumes of these buildings before we even showed everything to Josh, because we were using the tools at our disposal for layout. Before we knew it, we had put together a whole library of art assets."

Many futuristic sci-fi movies and animated projects tend to take their visual cues from Ridley Scott's hugely influential 1982 masterpiece, *Blade Runner*. But according to Scheier, Cooley wanted Iacon City to steer away from those familiar dystopian tropes. "We wanted to make this world have more vibrancy and energy," says Scheier. "I was inspired by the nightlife beauty of Shinjuku and Tokyo, where you see neon lights everywhere and there's this absolute harmony in the way it simply hums in the background. We wanted the miners' sector to feel alive, where you could turn one corner and go to a nightclub or have an Energon drink around another corner at Hal's Bar."

IACON TOWER

Iacon Tower is the central landmark of Iacon City. "We knew we would spend a lot of time there, so that was our major triple-A set piece, and everything else had to have the same amount of fidelity and high-definition resolution to it," says Scheier. "We created these high-res paintings and handed them to our artist Tim Kallok. He used Substance Painter and Houdini to texture map on top

RIGHT: Art by Jason Scheier

of them, and that was passed on as a basic guide to the team at ILM."

The scale of the whole world was based on Orion Pax. "He was the central figure for this world, and we made sure the scale was consistent in all the different departments," adds Scheier. "The character lineups needed to be with the various building lineups. If you pull the camera way out into space, Iacon Tower would be right in the center, and below it would be the Well of All Sparks."

"A huge part of my job is doing a metric of research, looking at different unique buildings around the world," says de Jesus. "We had to make sure that whatever we designed felt grounded and relatable, even though the whole movie takes place on an alien planet."

He adds, "A lot of the Art Deco building inspiration was from cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Also, a huge source of inspiration was Osamu Tezuka's *Metropolis*, a 2001 anime movie that married the epic look of Art Deco and technology beautifully. We wanted to show an early version of Cybertron untouched by war, where everything feels bright and hopeful."

RIGHT: Art by Jason Scheier, Tim Kallok, and Gerald de Jesus

"For the buildings that make up Iacon City, we looked at a lot of Art Deco architecture for inspiration. Art Deco architecture has a classic and stoic look that we felt we could use as a building block. And as we added more futuristic elements, Jason and I started calling the overall style 'Art Techo'!"

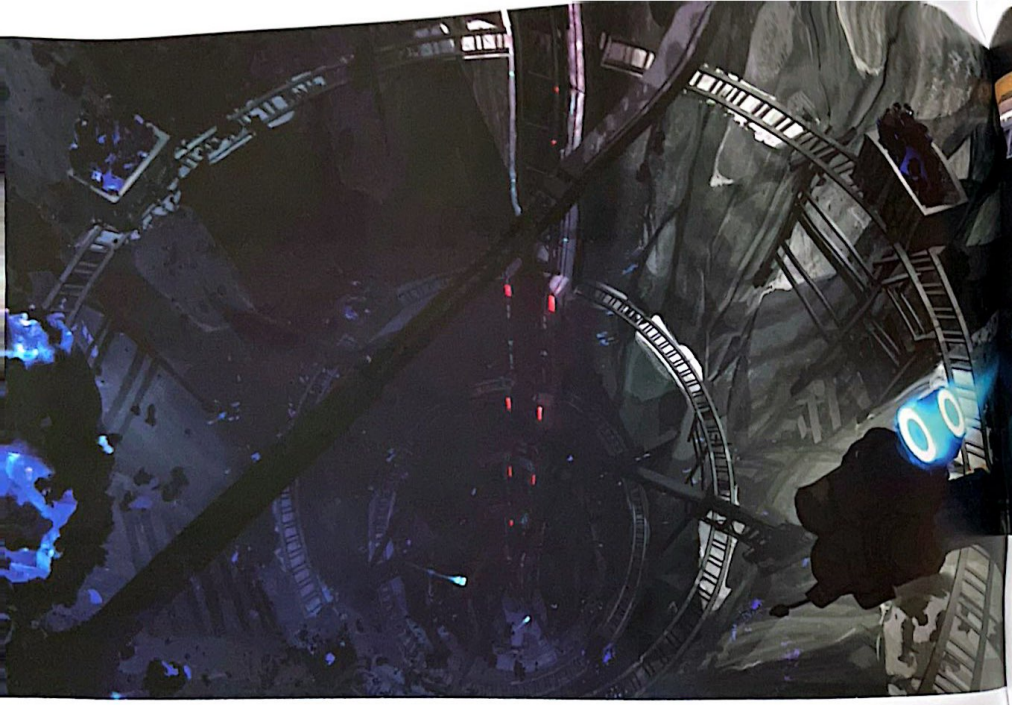
—GERALD DE JESUS

THE MINERS' TRAIN

Because Energon is Cybertron's main source of energy, the Energon mines are a vital element of the movie. The train that connects the miners' barracks to the Energon mines also plays a pivotal role. Passengers on the train "get this beautiful, panoramic view of the city, as well as the Iacon Tower," says Scheier. "Once you get to the mines, there's a main hub where the miners congregate and then disperse to their jobs."

The art department took a lot of care in building all the mines for this section of the movie. "There's a main central area that is shaped like a giant sock, and underneath is this chamber that goes all the way to the Energon operation, which fuels this world," says Scheier. "You can see conveyer belts that take the raw Energon rocks and turn them into liquid form and then into cubes. There's a spiraling machine in the opening section of the movie, which swirls the material like a big martini shaker. This is another nod to the 1980s cartoon, where Energon is always seen as these giant cubes, and the workers would be pulling these cubes inside the mines."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier and Tim Kallok



THE ENERGON MINES

The main area of the mines is called the Antechamber, where the miners access the deepest mines. Early in the movie, a brief time montage depicts workers drilling for Energon when someone yells, "It's unstable!" which cues special Transformers with lights to come brace the walls.

"Once the Energon starts to become unstable, it changes color from white to red," explains Scheier. "Originally, it's just a classic blue color. But when it shifts into this destabilized mode, it turns into a gentle purple, and then red with a white hue in its center. We wanted to create this feeling that it can change material properties at any point if it's not treated properly. We were playing around with this idea we got from the movie *Backdraft*, where the flames suck the air out of the room and then it blows up."

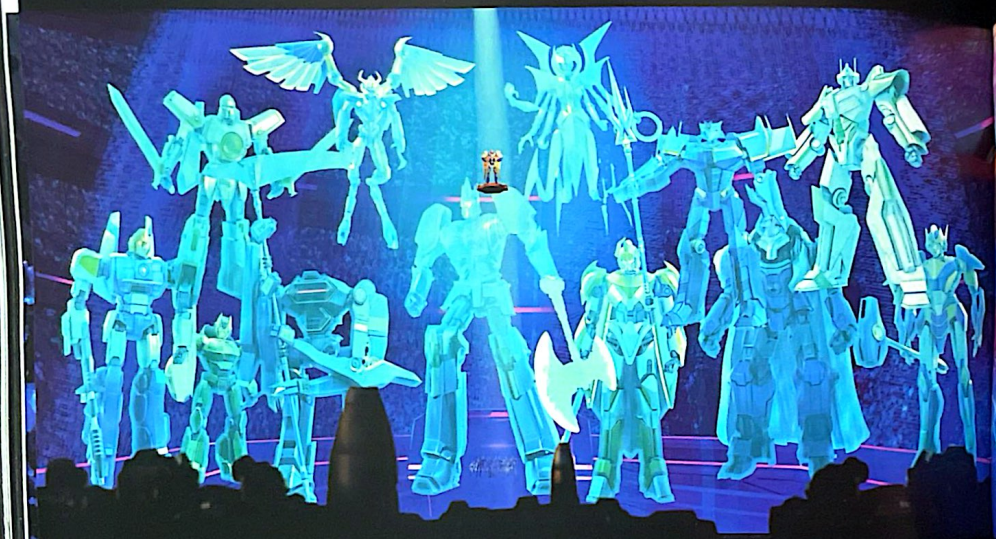
ABOVE: Art by Kenny Vo

In that same early scene, a piece of the Energon mine wall support is broken by the transforming, polymorphing cave, which subsequently breaks one of the submachines. The whole operation grinds to a halt. "Everything works like a mind hive here," says Scheier. "The whole operation is reminiscent of the Old West, where you had gold-mining carts. But this operation uses magnetic levitation, so it can carry a lot more weight. Everything in this world is very tactile. The miners must grab these mining tools. A big grinder and a giant chisel crush and chip away the rock. At one point, we even added these huge dumpsters, which you can still see sitting in the background as we dressed them in the environment."

THE MINERS' BARRACKS

The miner bots rest in the barracks after a long day at work. "You can't see them in the movie, but we had standees right next to the docks, where they can get Energon cubes before they rest," says Scheier. "We thought about giving all the bots their own name placards, like you would see in a military barracks. Everything is very orderly in this space. But they also have a communal area where the robots can play video games. We even designed a nightclub that follows a Cassette Futurism design scheme and hearkens back to the 1980s cartoon, but sadly, it's not featured in the movie."

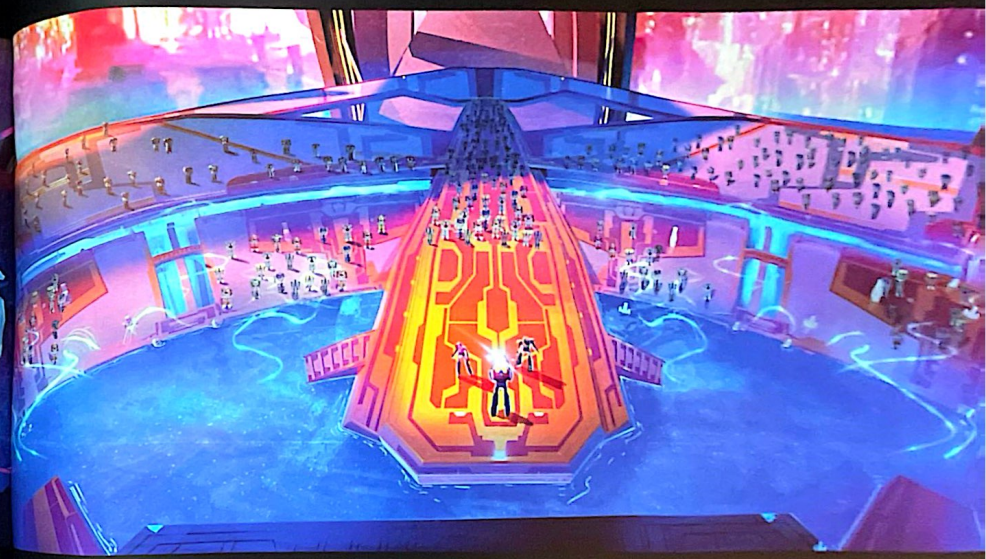
ABOVE: Art by Bryan Jimenez



IACON STADIUM

The Iacon 5000 is an annual event in Cybertron where all the robots congregate for a great race in which contestants must lap a five-hundred-mile track fifty times. Sentinel Prime uses the occasion to talk about the state of Cybertron and build the bot society's morale so they can be more productive and produce more Energon. "Sentinel has created this spectacle, and you can see all the holograms of the elder Primes," says Scheier. "No miner has ever competed in this event, so when Orion Pax and D-16 enter the race, it breaks everyone's brains! Everyone is excited and watches them compete because they can't transform like the other robots. The biggest challenge was to create obstacles for them that were properly scaled. They needed to start at the stadium and then go through the entire city, and then come back to it at the end of the race. If you look at it closely, the whole design of the hub looks like a giant trophy."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier



WELL OF ALL SPARKS

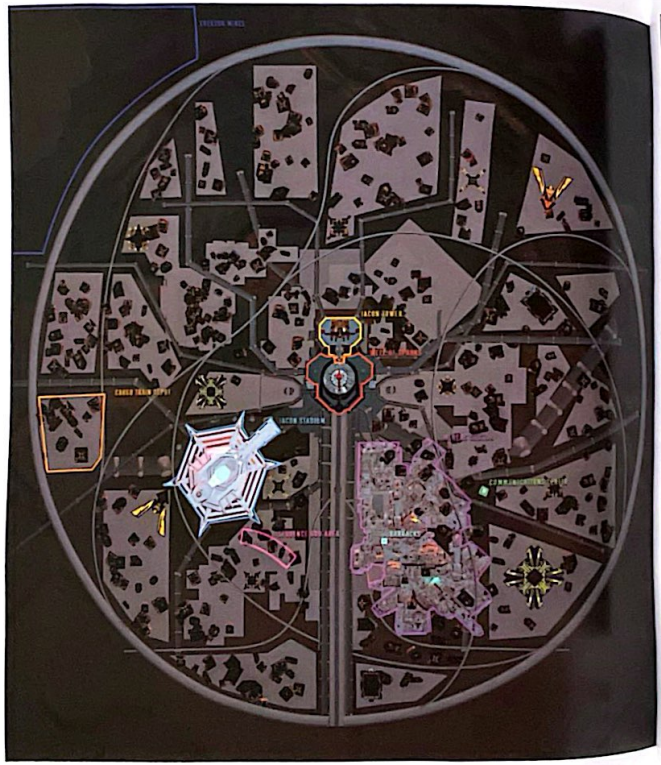
The birthplace of all Transformers, the Well of All Sparks, is naturally a place of high importance to all Cybertronians, so it needed to signal reverence. Legend has it that after giving birth to his children, Primus sealed the Well to prevent his rival, Unicron, from finding the planet and destroying them all. "The mural painted on the walls of this landmark was designed by our artist Mario Pata and then created in 3D by Tim Kallok," says de Jesus. "Our goal was to suggest a great deal of historic importance to this location—this would be the equivalent of a memorial you would see in Washington, DC."

The Well of All Sparks is considered the epicenter of Iacon City. "You have the miners' sector, which is more pedestrian, so you're going to see more catwalks and things that the non-transforming robots have to use as they can only move in a biped mode," says Scheier. "Then, you'll notice the air traffic in the background from the Transformers that are moving in the air."

ABOVE: Art by Gerald de Jesus

Iacon City is divided into neighborhoods and sectors, each designed to house a specific population of robots. "Early on, as we were putting together the guide for the surfacing department, we took into consideration how different each part of this city would be from the others," says Scheier. "If you go down to the miners' sector, things will look a bit more decayed and worn out. The color palette would be impacted because the interiors have been exposed to weather through the years. This is a metal planet, so the more you get down into the miners' sector, it becomes duller and has more of a patina. As you get closer to the Well of Sparks, the center point for the two worlds, you see more of an oxidized metal look, sort of like the green and the gold colors coming together. Then, when you go over to the Iacon Tower, there are goldens, bronzes, and umbers, what we call these decadent, vibrant colors. There are hints of sheen, satin, specular effects, and reflectivity. It's where the humble portion of this world comes together with an upscale society in one place."

The overall design of the Well of All Sparks also follows a shape philosophy that is echoed throughout the movie. "Our planet is a sphere, and so is the Well of All Sparks," explains Scheier. "Primus is also a sphere, and even the Matrix of Leadership is shaped like a sphere with two side wings. We're always hearkening back to a circle, which offers this sense of peace. We spent months designing this location because it was one of our triple-A sets. We wanted to reuse a lot of the materials from this set, so we spent a lot of time developing its bronzes, golds, and different hues of silvers and reds that we could later repurpose throughout the city."



ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier and Tim Kallok

SUBLEVEL 50

B-127 has been banished to the lowest level of the miners' section, Sublevel 50. He is joined by Orion and D-16 after their illegal participation in the big race. "We wanted to treat this part of the world as a bit of a horror movie," says Scheier. "When we first see Bee here, he is wearing a welding mask. That's how we hid his identity. Once he removes it, we recognize him as this goofy, lovable character. My favorite part of that set was that everything was functional: There are these huge gas chambers to the side of the main area where the fire is incinerating. The gas is feeding this patinated burner. It was inspired by big industrial furnaces, but the whole thing is squeezed into a very small, claustrophobic place."

ABOVE: Art by Mario Pata and Gerald de Jesus

TRAIN TO THE WILD

When the audience first sees the cargo train traveling to the wild, it's assumed that it only carries waste for disposal. But it's revealed later that Sentinel Prime is actually giving the Quintessons Energon cubes so he can stay in power. "The cubes are contained inside the train, so we thought about the space shuttle, where it has these doors that lift off and open up like a flower," says Scheier. "Everything is actually functional and works with a mag-lev [magnetic levitation] system. All the boxes and crates are magnetically charged, and once they're activated, they get locked to the floor. That takes us to the scene where they're moving vertically through the city and Elita deactivates the magnets and lets the crates all plummet to the ground. After all, this is a metal planet!"

THE SURFACE OF CYBERTRON

The film's artistic team decided to introduce a major shift in colors and textures when the main characters ascend to the surface of the planet. "One of our biggest challenges was that this world was made of metal, and we needed to figure out exactly which variety of colors and textures we could use to remain true to that metal, especially when it comes to how dull we need to make them for the surface area," says de Jesus.

"In contrast to the Tech Deco vibe of Iacon City, we were looking at a lot of really interesting geodes, minerals, and crystals," adds Scheier. "I took a trip to the Natural History Museum to look at their geode and mineral collection, and Gerry did a deep dive into books on the subject. We did a large photo scan of all the images and also revisited some of Maurice Noble's designs. We started to think, 'What if the surface was iridescent and there was this opalescence to the quality of the metals that would bring cool color vibrations to the landscape?' We thought about what a planet with a reflective metal surface would look like, and how it might look like an endless, windswept valley that extends into infinity. I also came up with what the plants and other life-forms would look like in this

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Art by Jason Scheier

unusual environment. Of course, some of the colors changed in the movie, but the sense of scale and design stayed the same as the concept art."

Another visual highlight of the surface is its unusual aurora borealis. "When we first reveal the surface, we see this unique version of the natural phenomenon," Scheier says. "We figured out that the atmosphere is a lot thinner on Cybertron, so it doesn't pull the aurora high into the sky and actually keeps it closer to the horizon line."

THE MOUTH OF UNICRON CAVE

When a Quintesson ship pursues Orion, D-16, Bee, and Elita, they stumble upon a sinister cave made of jagged, metallic rocks. The opening of the cave is shaped like a mouthful of threatening teeth, and it's covered with a radioactive metal that is slowly spreading across the planet. The cave also contains the bodies of the thirteen ancient fallen Primes.

"We wanted to make it feel quite ominous, and the teethlike entrance helped add to the forbidding nature of the location," says de Jesus. "In Los Angeles, we have an eagle-shaped rock that's called Eagle Rock. Similarly, here we have a cave that looks like the mouth of Unicron—an awful planet-eating monstrosity that was first introduced in the 1986 cartoon."

Scheier points out that the team also made a modular kit out of this location so that the rocks could be tumbled around, reused, and re-dressed. "This was an important spot because it's where we discover Alpha Trion and where he tells the main characters the truth about Sentinel Prime," he explains. "This is where they realize that their whole life has been a lie, and that all Transformers are born with special cogs, but they've been taken away. It's a call to adventure as our four heroes tumble out of the cave and try to learn how to use their newly recovered cogs and evade trackers. At this point in the story, we wanted the movie to be awash with vibrant colors. This is where we see ancient space dust that has landed on the planet and caused basic life to sprout on the surface. After spending about four sequences in the cave, we were able to make this new backdrop full of activities. We used overexposed lights to give the impression that your eyes are getting stabbed by bright light."

LEFT: 3D visdev model by Josh Tonnesen

QUINTESSON SHIPS/ MOTHERSHIP

The Quintessons are known as crafty traders who shouldn't be trusted, and they were designed to reflect that. The look of their ships was partially inspired by crabs and other crustaceans. "I looked at blue crabs because they often have these red bellies, but they also have this really weird blue iridescence on top of them," says Scheier. "I played around with their scale a little bit. When you first see them, they look gigantic. We needed to add lots of tiny details like railings and footwork on something that was organic. We managed to do that with light. If you look at the interior oil holes of this giant crustacean's surface closely, there are all these little, tiny pinhole lights. We really wanted to showcase that in our designs."

In addition, the spaceships are able to move, breathe, and transform. "They can actually create their own atmosphere," he adds. "When you're in that sequence, you don't realize it, but it's cloaking itself with its own atmosphere to hide. When it comes out of that atmosphere, it reveals itself. I was inspired by Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. What better studio to work with than ILM, which worked on that movie as well? They did a modern visual take on that, and I did get a chance to design that ship, so it was a lot of fun to play in that wheelhouse."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier

HIGH GUARD COMMAND CAMP

The High Guard Command seen in the movie are Starscream, Soundwave, and Shockwave, familiar Decepticon characters for fans of the franchise. The filmmakers welcomed the chance to include them.

"We got the chance to create a range of variants based on these three characters," says Scheier. "If you look closely, you'll be able to notice some characters in the background called Reflectors, and these are the original Decepticons from the G1. We wanted to be inspired by those original characters. We were playing around with the idea of the crashed Quintesson ship and their camp. It looks like they have fire, but it's not Earthlike fire. We figured that the chemical properties of fire would be different on an alien planet, so it has more magenta and purple in its flames. We wanted sparks, fires, and explosions to look different on Cybertron."

Both Scheier and de Jesus hoped to reuse the set they created for the High Guard Command camp. "Gerry and I were so excited that we were going to get a chance to see the Decepticons in this movie," says Scheier. "I built this set very early on when the two friends' fracture was supposed to take place at the camp, and we hated to throw away a set." So Scheier pitched an idea to Cooley: Could they feature the camp set at the end of the movie? They could. "It ended up looking gorgeous too," he says.

RIGHT, TOP AND BOTTOM: Art by Mario Pata

THE HALL OF PRIMES

In the movie, the ancient Hall of Primes tower has been taken over by Sentinel Prime and serves as his headquarters. In its center, he erected giant golden statues of himself and his protector. Sharp-eyed fans will recognize murals of the ancient fallen Primes on the walls, as well as a painting of Primus, the ancient creator God of the Transformers, on the back wall. Images of the powerful Matrix of Leadership and a small Autobot symbol are also sprinkled in the background for fans to spot. "Even the floor has a celestial motif, and all the other planets from the lore are rotating around it on the surface," Scheier points out. "The ceiling ended up being static because it would compete for the audience's attention in some of the scenes of the characters fighting in that space."

ABOVE: Art by Bryan Jimenez
RIGHT: All art by Mario Pata

THE CONTROL ROOM

The Control Room is a stalactite tower that hangs from the roof of Iacon City and transmits messages and daily broadcasts to the citizens of the city. The design was inspired by Teletraan 1 (a.k.a. Mainframe), a semi-sentient Autobot computer that runs the spaceship/Earth base known as the Ark in the Generation 1 cartoon. "If you look at the control panels inside the Control Room, they are all the same shapes as Teletraan 1," says Scheier. "That was another homage we paid to the original G1 cartoon. The characters who work there are all Iaconians, and when Bee smashes the place up, he realizes that they are just innocent robots operating the machinery. Later, we bring Airachnid up there and put her on the hollow table, and they're able to take whatever's on her mind and transmit it to the whole city. That's how the truth is revealed to the city that Sentinel Prime is the villain, and he has been sacrificing everyone for his own power and gains."

LEFT: Art by Bryan Jimenez

CLASH OF THE TITANS

"After Orion Pax and D-16 finally become Optimus Prime and Megatron, they confront each other, and we needed to stage the biggest and most intense battle of our movie. Everything had to be amped up more from the previous scenes.

"In the beginning of the movie, the camera is positioned much higher, so that you're almost at eye level with Orion and D-16. But over the course of the movie, as they get bigger, the camera starts to drop lower. By the third act, when they're beginning to really fight, the camera is as low as the live-action *Transformers* movies. We *really* get the sense of the size and weight of these characters as they are just pummeling each other.

"For the fight itself, I really wanted to showcase something that two humans wouldn't be able to do. In fact, we originally had a couple of stunt guys who choreographed a fight for us, but when we looked at it, it just felt like two dudes fighting. So, we decided to have a fight that only Transformers could have. Instead of punching Optimus in the face, Megatron punches him with his gun. Optimus's smokestacks spin around and shoot fire. We also treated some of Megatron's animation as if he were a gorilla: he literally comes flying through the air and slams on top of Optimus. When Optimus finally gets his Energon axe, it *needed* to be more than something coming out of his arm. So, it spins around, blocks bullets, and sparks rays. He can even make it switch from one hand to the other. We were really able to take advantage of the fact that the two are Transformers, and they have these superpowers. That's why we cranked everything up to eleven during this important battle sequence."

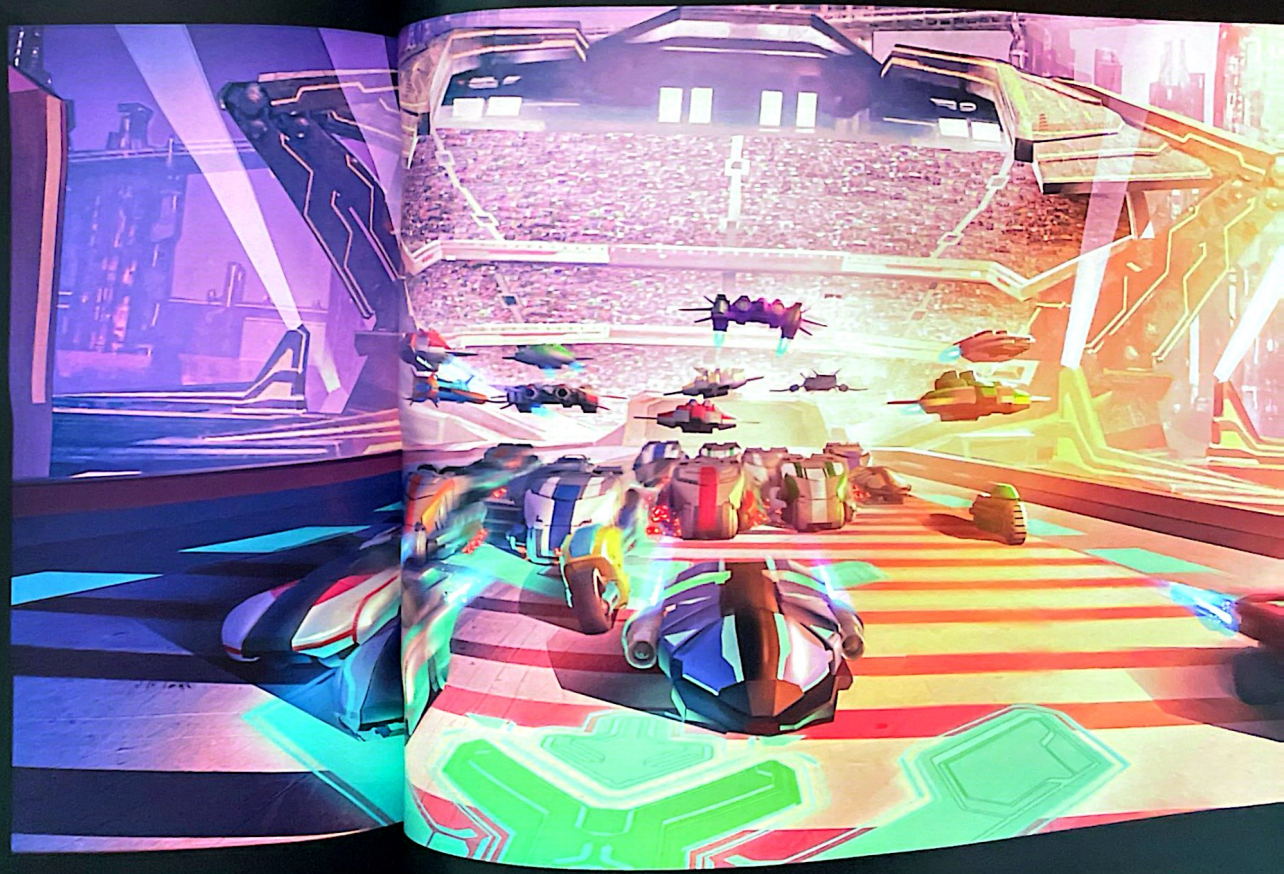
—JOSH COOLEY, DIRECTOR

LEFT: Art by Gerald de Jesus
NEXT PAGE: Art by Gerald de Jesus

ANATOMY OF A SCENE: THE IACON 5000 RACE

One of the film's most thrilling sequences is the high-octane Iacon 5000 race, in which Orion and D-16 illegally compete with top-level Transformers to prove that they're just as capable and dynamic as the higher-echelon robots. Zooming at over one thousand miles per hour on a treacherous, transforming course, the friends prove that miner bots can strive for better things. The visually stunning sequence involved all the key departments of the movie working together to deliver a white-knuckle ride unlike anything moviegoers have seen before.

RIGHT: Art by Bryan Jimenez



HOW TO DODGE TRANSFORMING OBSTACLES

"I wanted to facilitate a race that could only happen in this film, which means our main characters taking advantage of the fact that they can change in and out of baseball mode to vehicles to cross the finish line," recalls director Josh Cooley. "Orion Pax and D-16 are trying to show that they are just as worthy by entering that race, even though they can't transform in the beginning of the movie. That tells you a lot about their characters and their drive to stand out. Then, we raised the stakes by having the obstacles in the race also transform."

The race also allows the audience to get a fast tour of Iacon City. "The race winds through the city, and the road itself is constantly moving and transforming in front of the robots," says Cooley. "The racers don't know exactly where they're going, so they must bob and weave to get around each other, without really knowing where the finish line is. On top of that, we added EMP (electromagnetic pulse) cannons that are shooting at the racers. At some point, the road drops and they free-fall twenty stories down into the next part of the race—with walls dropping up in front of them. So we essentially threw everything we could at them to make the conditions really difficult for all the racers, but especially for Orion and D-16."

Transformers One producer Aaron Dem says that the production of the race sequence was one of the most challenging aspects of the film. "It's a race through the whole city with Transformers, both cars

ABOVE: Art by Gerald de Jesus

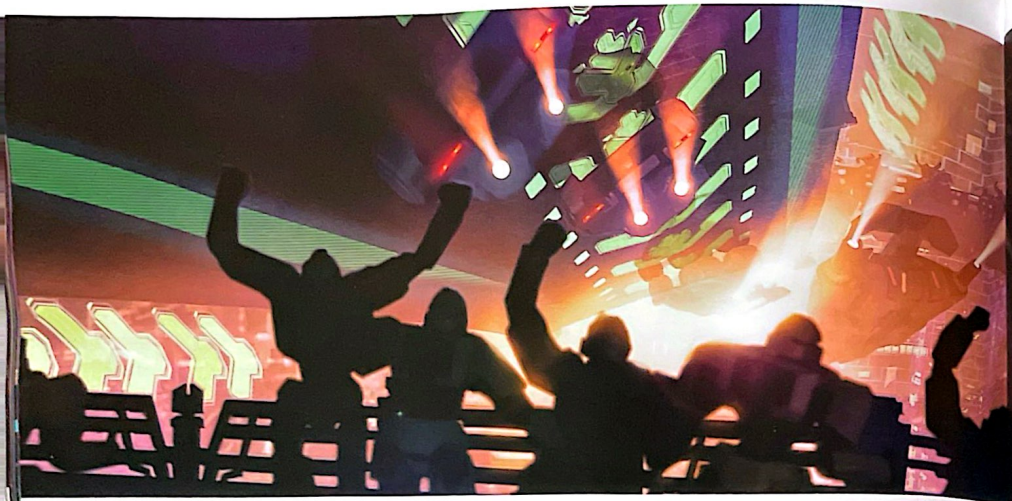
ABOVE: Art by Bryan Almanza

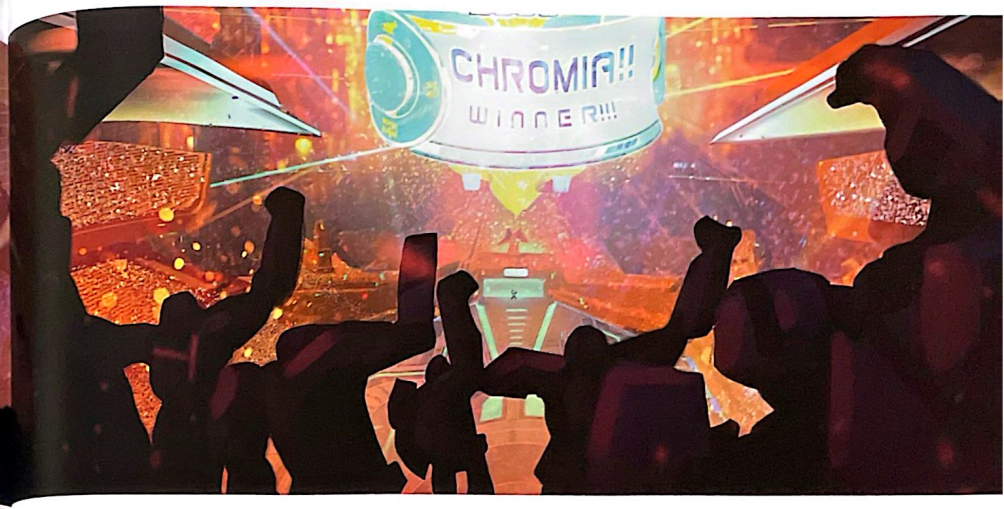
and planes," he says. "First, we had to storyboard the whole thing, which took thousands of boards. Then, we had to craft it in editorial to a place where it was manageable for ILM and our head of layout, Chris Batty, to start building it out. Once we got into the animation and each one of the characters transforming, it became quite complex. The scene needed to be heavily choreographed for all the elements to work, and it also needed to be cut in a nice pace. Another huge challenge was lighting it, because you're traveling through the city; you're traveling through tunnels, light and dark. It was the biggest sequence in our movie, which ends up being one of our tentpoles in the film."

As production designer Jason Scheier explains, "We wanted to design this sequence in a way that the viewer goes through multiple tiers and many geographical levels, while experiencing the excitement and splendor of seeing the race for the first time. I pitched this idea to Josh: 'What if we had the audience literally at the starting line, looking through the glass down on the ground? Orion catches his friend off guard and throws a jet pack on his back, and suddenly the door slams open and they're in the race. The audience is taken by surprise, along with D-16."

The creative team played with atmosphere, lighting, and scale to intensify the visceral experience of the race. "We made sure that we followed them from the very beginning at that starting line through different

LEFT: Art by Bryan Jimenez





parts of Iacon City. So, if you watch the race, they go right past Iacon Tower, which is the largest structure in Iacon City. They go through the middle of the city, all the way to the other side where the miners' sector is. And then they go through a tunnel, where there are multiple crashes. We also have this opening and closing door, which actually Swiss cheeses some of the characters to death."

Scheier says he, Cooley, and Batty also came up with the idea of a final obstacle consisting of magnets that pulled the racers to the side. "They just narrowly escape through this gauntlet. That's when one of the other Transformers busts in from behind and hits D-16 and knocks him to the ground. Then, we have Orion telling D-16 that he's not going to leave him behind and that he'll finish the race with him. It takes us back to the whole notion of 'Till all are one,' and they both get to the finish line—although another racer, Chromia, splashes through the finish line and wins *the entire race*."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier

Scheier adds that Batty *drove* the scene with the camera, making sure all the obstacles were working. "In the art department, we were also building all those pieces for the race and giving them to Chris's team in layout and previs, making sure that they were supported the entire way."

"The Iacon 5000 sequence definitely employed a lot of experimentation, and we had many different versions of it," recalls Batty, who has worked on numerous VFX-heavy movies such as *Star Trek Beyond*, *Jurassic World*, and *Aquaman*. "As the story evolved, we tried to experiment and play around with what this sort of fantastical sci-fi race could be."

ABOVE: Art by Jason Scheier

The layout supervisor explains that the team adopted the lensing style of a pure action movie. "We were just trying to show speed and dynamics through the whole thing," Batty says. "But toward the end, I think we became a little bit more objective, as we wanted to show both our main characters in the same shot, especially when they're trying to navigate that very last obstacle. We also tried to keep the speed up for everything, and sometimes we had to cheat light poles to make things whoosh by. [Scheier] did a lot of great design work for them to maintain that sense of super speed."

A RACE THAT BINDS

Lead editor Lynn Hobson says that the scene also serves to establish the strong friendship and bond between Orion and D-16 in the very first act—a bond that will eventually fall apart in the third act.

"We had to follow these main characters through a race with all the high-level Transformers, with thousands of spectators in the stadium," says Hobson, connecting the action in the movie to the character development and the audience's investment in the outcome. "When [Darkwing] pops up in the race, we had to make him stand out against the other Iaconians. So we added scenes where they had to bump into him, knock him down, and show him get mad. Just to highlight things like that helps the audience get

RIGHT: Art by Gerald de Jesus

emotionally connected to it rather than just watching it. All the departments really worked closely to make that important connection happen throughout the race."

To figure out the right visuals for the race, the ILM team studied live-action references from numerous real-world races. "We would get all these different ideas, and then my associate editor and I would work hard to build them," says Hobson.

"For this scene, our filmmakers and the writers used a lot of creativity. Even our art department and camera team were like, 'Wow, we can do anything! Is it just roads? Do they turn into airplanes and fly sometimes? They can go upside down and do loops!'"

LEFT: Art by Jason Scheier, layout by Josh Tonnesen
NEXT PAGE: Art by Gerald de Jesus

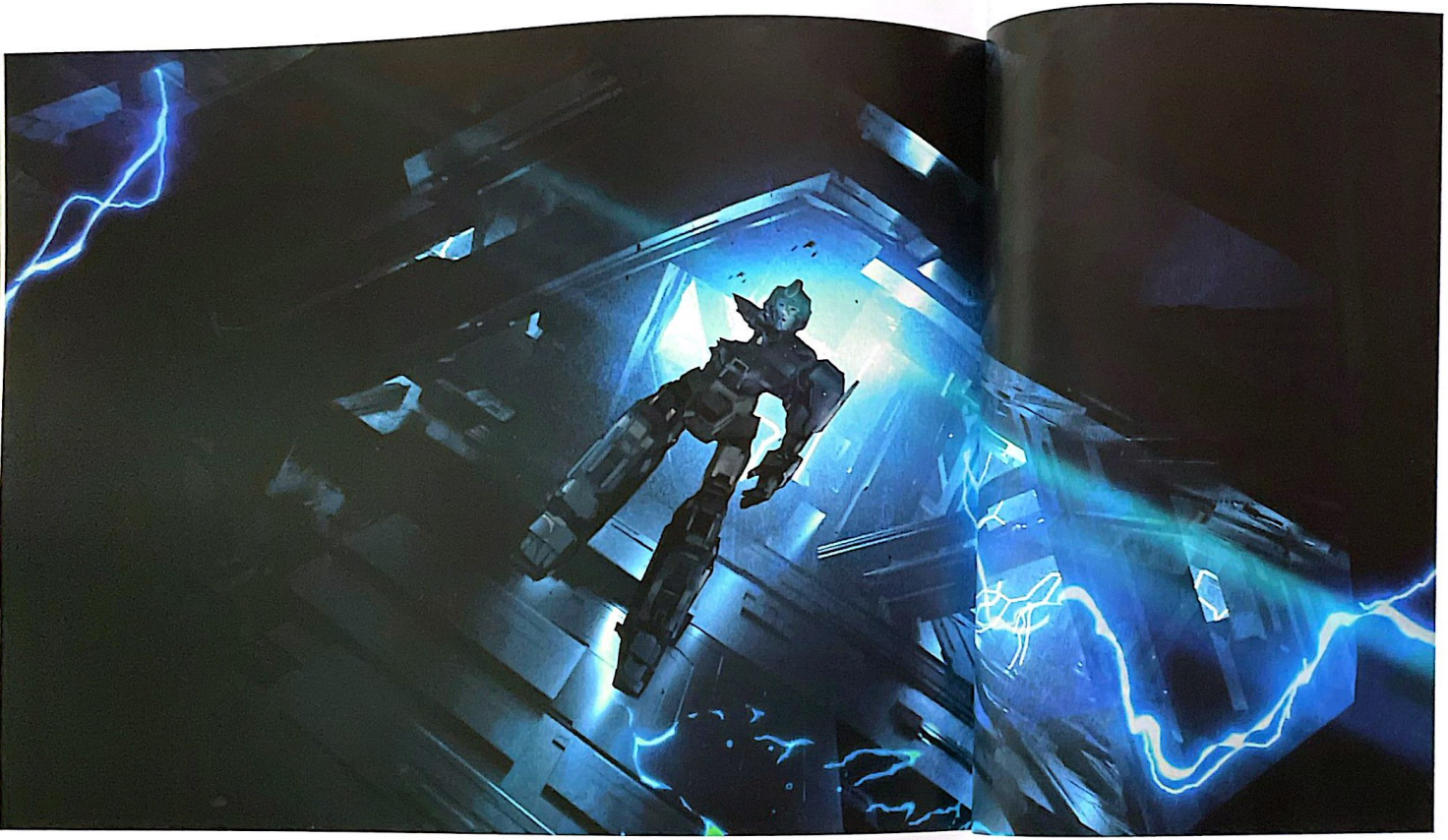
AFTERWORD

Forty years after toy giant Hasbro introduced Takara Tomy's giant transforming robots to fans around the world, a new CG-animated movie has redefined and reintroduced the popular characters to the big screen. While paying homage to Sunbow and Toei Animation's Generation 1 cartoon, Hasbro and Paramount's feature is set billions of years before the events of the core mythology.

Under the direction of Josh Cooley, the creative teams at Hasbro, Paramount, and Industrial Light & Magic worked closely to present a visually stunning depiction of the popular characters and their planet. "The world of Transformers has a fantastic, mythic quality to it," says Cooley. "These characters are robots, but they're more than meets the eye. The key to bringing them to animated life was tapping into their human core. The look of the movie is just as epic, and it's unlike anything that has been done before."

Cooley and his team were huge fans of the G1 style of the original show and wanted to bring that same clear, appealing look to the feature. "The artists created these great character designs, silhouettes, and amazing backgrounds for the project," says Cooley.

RIGHT: Art by Gerald de Jesus



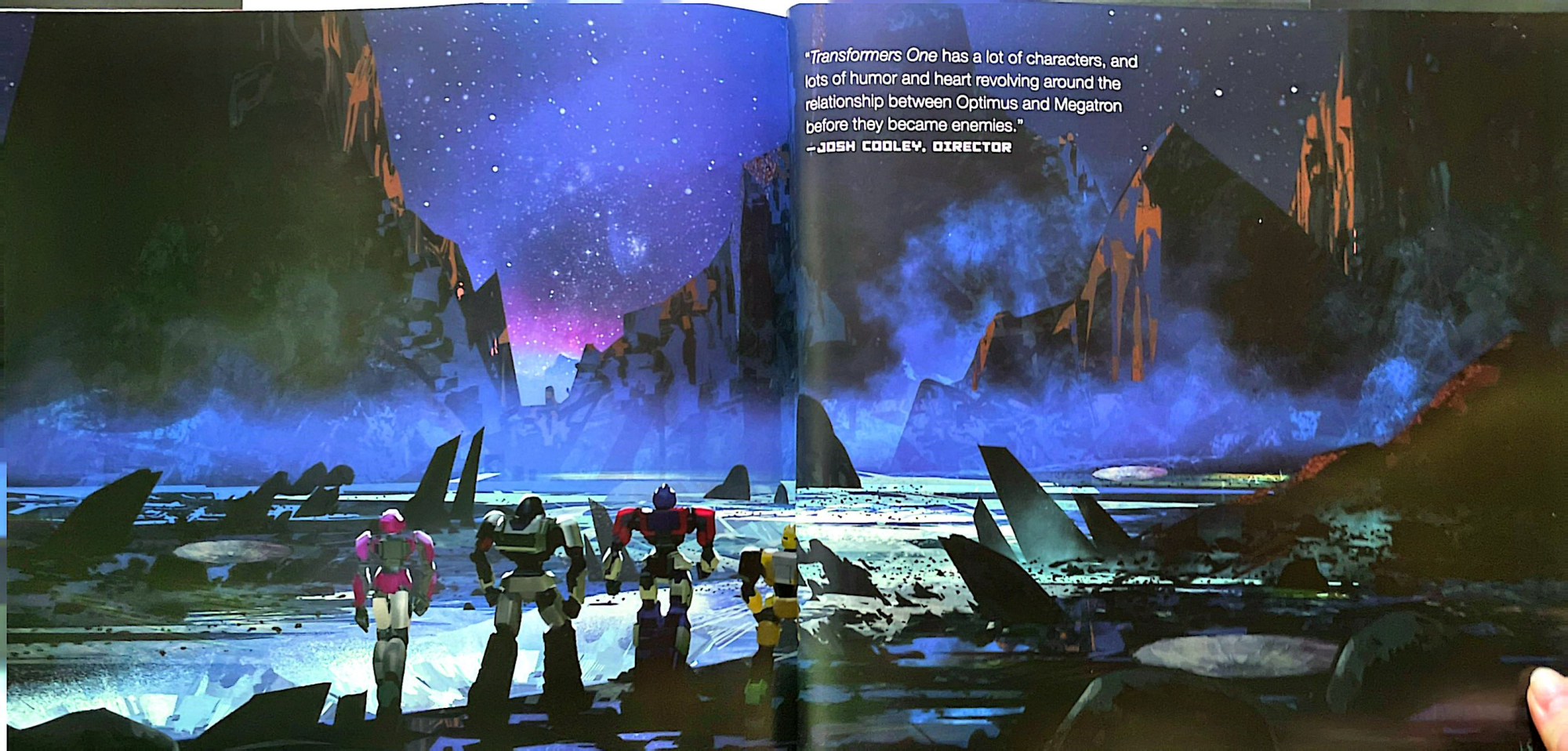
"The robots have a definite sense of weight and color to them, and the audience can feel as if they could reach out and touch them. But at the same time, you can feel the artists' hands that were involved in making them."

Like Cooley, many of the creative team members of the movie grew up watching the original show on TV and the 1986 animated movie in theaters. They were all heavily invested in making the best version of a new Transformers animated feature possible.

Now that their labor of love has finally been released, they hope that a new generation of fans will discover the magic of this alien planet and its unforgettable metallic heroes. "Making this film was an amazing experience for everybody, so we want both the fans and those who are experiencing this world for the first time to be as happy with it as we are," says Cooley.

Here's to many more action-packed, animated adventures set in Cybertron and beyond!

LEFT: Art by Yun Ling and Jason Scheier
NEXT PAGE: Art by Jason Scheier



"*Transformers One* has a lot of characters, and lots of humor and heart revolving around the relationship between Optimus and Megatron before they became enemies."

—JOSH COOLEY, DIRECTOR

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THE FILMMAKERS:

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Sabi Lofgren

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Zev Foreman
Cyrus Shaki-Khan
Alyse D'Antuono

RIGHT: Art by Jason Scheier

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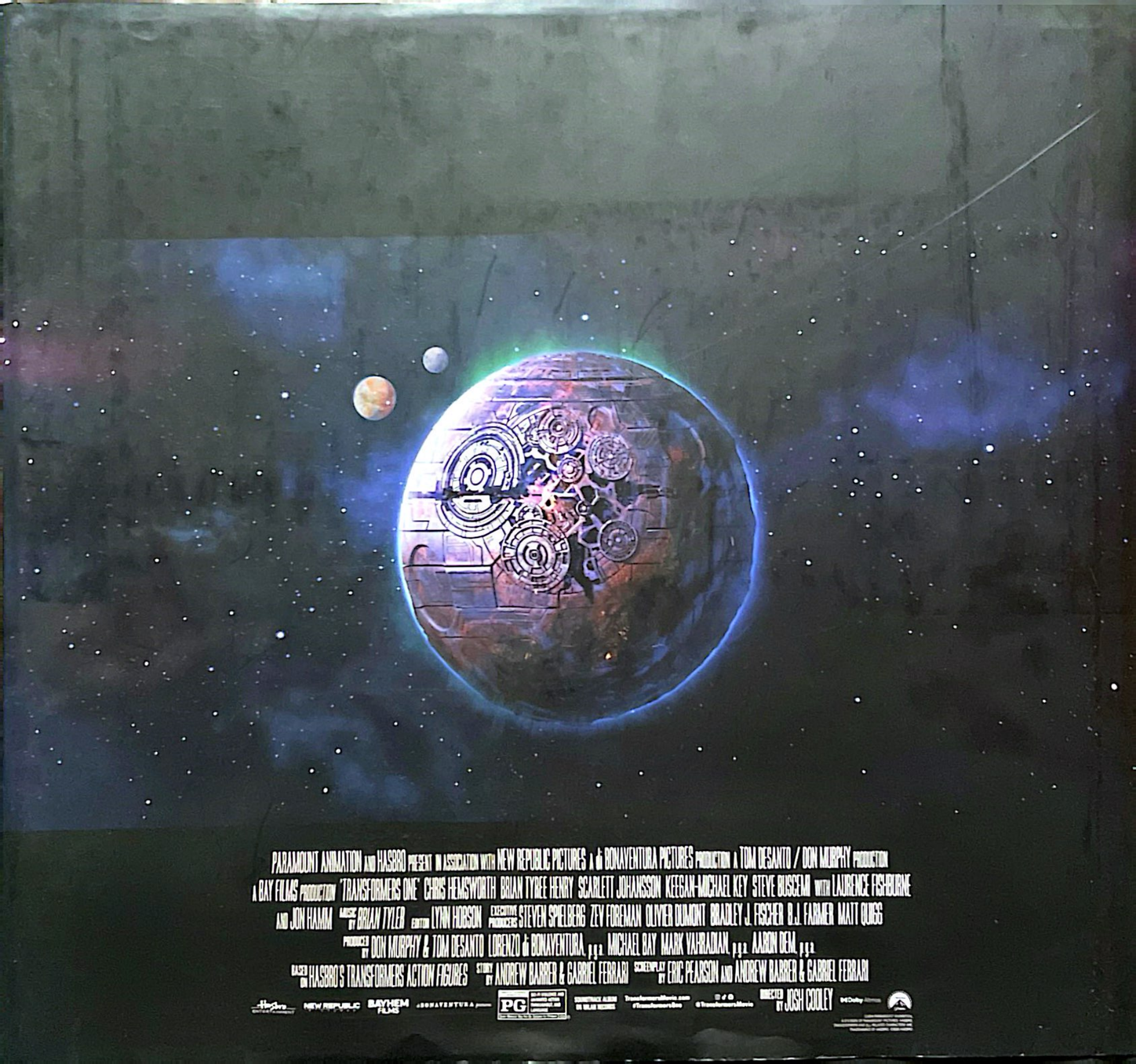
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